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**HOLIDAY
DOUBLE
ISSUE**

MACLEANS

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2008 THE YEAR IN PICTURES P.44



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12 SANTA SPEAKS
Kenneth White talks *Turkey* with the jolliest of them all: the one who finds it tough to tighten his big belt. Mr. Claus manages to find plenty of holiday cheer even amidst tough economic times—although he has no land words for Hollywood.

Mitch Raphael on Justin Trudeau and Marthe Hall Finley's Christmas party bot, the Harper family record for staying out in the cold, and how Jim Flaherty gets the guys to himself

Bob Rae was talked out of the race for the Liberal crown to bring in a more election-ready leader. Now Michael Ignatieff is saying he will do everything to avoid an election. Is getting cozy with Stephen Harper a

New Liberal Leader
Michael Ignatieff has written extensively about almost every major area of public policy—except the economy. His crash course begins now.

Damon McGuinty seems to think Santa lives in Ottawa, the polar bear hunt may meet its death thanks to European regulations the Montreal mafia takes a serious hit

It seems nearly impossible to imagine an end to the war in Afghanistan, especially as the number of Coalition soldiers killed there keeps rising. What challenges does the future hold? Can rebuilding efforts in the country create lasting change?

A U.S. soldier in Afghanistan reels with Odeh; his wife is adopted as

Old Time, Oldies, Every perfect falls a storm

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Let the bells ring out

The Salvation Army's Kettles and Bells campaign dates back to Christmas 1891 in San Francisco when Captain Joseph MaFie hauled a large soup kettle down to the water front and encouraged passersby to "Keep the Pot Boiling" for the local soup kitchens. Since then, the familiar red kettles and accords pumping sleigh bells in the hands of Salvation Army volunteers have become iconic sights and sounds of Christmas across North America and is a tangible link to the holiday's central role.

Over the years the Salvation Army's bells have been missed from stores and malls, or volunteers told to hush their sidewalk ringing for fear of driving away customers. In the 1980s, half the bells in California closed the bells away. The same thing happened in recent years at malls in Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver, among other places. This year, in Maryland, a mall asked Salvation Army managers to replace their brass chime rings with paper clips to create silent bells.

Canada's largest non-government provider of direct social services, and its street-corner donors are a major source of revenue for its charitable work. While it has experimented with such modern innovations as debt cards and an online kibble, it's still the hard-copy kettles and bells that hang on the bells of its 521 million-dollar Christmas donations. And like the dog that can't bark, a kettle without a bell is sure to miss.

To keep the momentum going, this year the Salvation Army organized the first-ever national launch to its Christmas campaign, with events in ten cities across the country. Significantly, its partner in this new endeavor—complex with beacons and bell ringing and symbolic first donations—was a mosque: often under attack itself, Wolf Mart.

Solomon for the bells. And rejoice in their contribution to doing good work, as well as the spirit of the season. ■

MACLEAN'S

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IT'S BAD, REALLY BAD

THE HEADLINE of your story about the financial crisis asks, "How bad will it get?" (Special Report, Dec. 8). Here's how bad it will get: I won't be able to buy lottery tickets anymore. I won't be able to buy that big house I've often dreamed of. I'll have to sit at home and wear clothes from last year. I'll buy one less bottle of beer per week. And I'll have to let go of the idea that I'll be in closer when I'm 65. I may also have to forgo reading and listening to the media prophets of doom and settle for a crossword instead.

Carl van Marrewijk, Orangeville, Ont.

SOUTH BEACH 8 BRIDE has yet another dark, negative cover. The only positive cover you've had in the last two months has been the Benches Obama election issue. Who knew things are bad, but do you need to wallow in it? Jack Hamilton, Pennington, Ont.

SINCE THE CUSTOM fill out of all past five months after a Maclean's cover story about "Life at \$100 a hour?" (June 5), I want to thank you for blaming "How bad will it get?" as the cover of your latest issue. Now we know the economic crisis will be over in five months. Jules Dillworth, Toronto

A COPY OF YOUR RECENT issue arrived today with an article on my office waiting room. The cover asks "How bad will it get?" Next to your publication was a copy of one local newspaper with a huge picture of Jack Layton, Stéphane Dion and Gillian Triggs standing side by side. Does it answer your question? Jim Lasser, Vancouver

SHOW US THE MONEY

ANOTHER CORRECTION ARTICLE about how world leaders aren't learning from past mistakes and are devising up plans for fiscal stimulus packages includes some valid points but contains a great omission ("Why don't we learn from Bob Rae's mistakes," Dec. 8). He never let government spending on the New Deal in the 1930s did not cure the Depression, it took World War II to do that. What he fails to note is that the economic transformation and upsurge during the war was precisely because of tremendous government spending, direction and control of the economy. The difficulty with the New Deal was that it was far too puny to achieve the

revels—compared to WWII spending—and there was no central focus, drive or concentration. The economic and social transformations during the early years of WWII were amazing, but that turnaround and achievement was directed and carried out entirely by government action. When the need is clear, government can and should lead and direct economic activity and the priorities of the people. Today, many of the main determinants of our well-being are in our near-term condition. Co-operation between government and business is essential, and needs to be supported by the public.

James E. Gaudin, Ottawa



CORRECTION: That fiscal stimulus net, and never have been, a solution to past financial problems, and reconfirms that the Second World War ended the Great Depression. Wasn't the funding for that war basically a level of government spending that was inconceivable a year or two earlier? The money went to aircraft, ships and armaments, not really all were scrap within five years. The technical wonders that were developed here on today. What is wrong with have government programs, so long as they are targeted to create something, and are not just a redistribution of cash?

Jeremy Reid, Gabriola, Ont.

I AGREE WITH every word Coyne wrote. However, how can this country's any government follow a sensible economic path while the media allow people like Dion, Layton and

Duceppe continued to lie to tell Canadians that the Conservatives are a bunch of cold-hearted bastards who will not spend \$50 billion of taxpayers' money to stimulate the economy? I voted for Harper because the Conservatives seemed to have the best plan for this country, but the responsibility for the mess in inquiry and fully on his shoulders. He should be kicked out of office for being vindictive, arrogant and stupid, but sadly he's still better than the other three.

Bruce Moore, Vancouver, B.C.

NO REAL ESTATE KABOOM

I WOULD LIKE to express my disappointment with your article "Could it happen here?" (Business, Dec. 8) about how a U.S.-style collapse of the Canadian real estate market could end up costing taxpayers. The article suggests that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp. may not have the necessary resources to cover potential losses due to an economic downturn. To the contrary, the CMHC follows prudent practices as set out by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, which ensures we have adequate reserves in place for such times. Furthermore, the CMHC does not and never has insured mortgage payments, which have been insured for the decline in the U.S. housing market. Also, the CMHC has a sophisticated underwriting system in place, which thoroughly scrutinizes all risk aspects of a loan application to ensure its viability. I would specifically like to see the recent story regarding your characterization of the CMHC as offering so-called "lender's loans"—mortgages for people who cannot demonstrate their income. This simply is not true. Self-employed borrowers must meet stringent qualification criteria, including demonstrating a solid history of managing their credit over time, before they are approved for mortgage insurance. We are very confident that the CMHC has the necessary record policies, practices and financial safeguards in place to ensure it is able to continue serving Canadians for many years to come.

Karen Kistley, President and CEO, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., Ottawa

OUR BALLS ARE BIGGER

HOW DISAPPOINTING to see Maclean's devote only a picture with a two-line caption to the

Grey Cup (seven days, Dec. 8) while the Buffalo Bills playing one regular season game in Toronto gets a full story ("Paying the bills," Sports, Dec. 8). In a time when the country also regionally divided, our only widely Canadian news outlet is incapable of covering the one completely Canadian sporting event

sooner than dig. I thought that Fuchska had already named The Little Drummer Boy for the Canadian Anthem, Mordecai, Alberta.

THE BARE JEWS BLOG bender on something Score: Fuchska, surely you must be able to better harness your will imagination when portraying the human and soul of religious matters that so many hold dear.

Gervin Paul, Abbotsford, B.C.

SCHOOLED ON SACKVILLE

AS A RESIDENT of Sackville, N.B., I was surprised by something I read in this article on Liberal Dominic LeBlanc ("Born to ruin," National, Dec. 15). In talking about his riding, LeBlanc noted that Acadia University students avoid the population in Sackville from 5,000 to 7,000. Acadia University is in Wolfville, N.S., at least 250 km away from Sackville. I had no idea that Acadia students spent somewhere



"I HAD a shackle on the Baby Jesus blog despite my beliefs."

that brings all Canadians together (even Quebecers and Albertans) for one week to celebrate high-risk, action-packed, three-day football. Over two million Canadians went to CFL games this year and almost four million tuned in to the Grey Cup. With these numbers the CFL is clearly relevant. Support our game. Support the CFL.

Adrian Weber, Vancouver

SWEET BABY JESUS!

I FOUND MYSELF CHUCKLING in the Baby Jesus blog ("Hi! I'm Baby Jesus. Hope you enjoy my blog," Comment, Dec. 11) despite the fact that I am opposed to mocking people's religion—especially when it is my own. I give Scott Feinberg high marks for wit and creativity. However, bender being insensitive, I think the article is a little cowardly. Christians are an easy target. Maybe because they turn the other cheek?

Tim Auer, St. Thomas, Ont.

I WAS SITTING at my desk one recent morning, going through my personal reading for the day. My Advent, as of course the emphasis is on God smiling the heavens and coming down to earth. I then recalled a snippet of the Baby Jesus blog. I burst out laughing, and thought, I am a sinful person in need of the salvation and hope offered me in Advent. But I couldn't help it. I got through the day's thought fine. And I figured the combination of laughter and Bible readings was a good way

here. I had always thought that the students you use in Sackville attended Maine (Acadia University)—located here in Sackville. I suspect LeBlanc was quoted incorrectly.

Erik Hakala, Sackville, N.B.

(Editor's Note: The mistake was ours, not LeBlanc's.)

YOU DON'T KNOW LILLIAN

YOUR RECENT EDITORIAL speaks to the issue of freedom of the press ("Using the right words for the right reason," From the Editors, Dec. 1). I support your cause in respect to the misuse of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. That said, I find your caption under the "Free of the World" (Seven Days, Dec. 1) to be far from the "right words for the right reason." The use of the phrase "Lillian, is that you?" bespeaks an insensitive attempt at sarcasm. The correspondence between Gordon Campbell's efforts to form better relations with the First Nations of British Columbia. The woven cedar headband represents many hours of work by a B.C. native artist, was likely presented in ceremonial or religious, and should not be compared with the colourful headbands worn by former B.C. premier Bill Vander Zalm's wife, Lillian, whom many of your readers probably could not even identify.

Lee Gahm, Qualicum Beach, B.C.

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MITCHEL RAPHAEL ON JUSTIN AND MARTHA'S XMAS PARTY BET AND THE TOBOGGANING HARPERS

JUSTIN'S TARTANS

Was it just a coincidence that on the day Michael Ignatieff became Interim Liberal leader, a tartan was worn up at 24 Sussex? Ken Harper and Rachel Harper built a snow fort (something they shreds do after a big snowfall) using sparkling bass to make blocks. The Liberal Christmas party was that night. Toronto MP Martha Hall Findlay told Justin Trudeau the would wear her black and white leather dress if he wore his kilt to the bash, so he did. Trudeau sported a red and green tartan pattern that represents the St. John's, his mother Margaret Sinclair Trudeau's family. He also wore white with the tartan from his father's maternal family, the Ellsers, which wasn't as Christmasy (since it's blue). At the Liberal bash Trudeau was spotted drinking a Milken Canadian, though he says his love of cheese is latent. Yv. Absent from the party was Stéphane Dion's wife, Janine Knibbe, who the former Liberal leader said was coming back to Ottawa the next day—his birthday—to pick up Stoneyknow Krieger, a television expert, has returned to teaching at the Royal Military College in Saint-Jean, Que. After the Liberal Christmas bash there was an after-party at the hip club Dandel on organized by Krista Blais, who had been meeting for the Ontario Young Liberal presidency in the tradition of Bob Rae, the only other non-Red for the position dropped off the ballot, making Blais a new young lily.

BLAKE TOOK HIS CHAIR AND RAN

There was a miscalculation at the New Democrats' Christmas party when former NDP MP even Bill Blaikie and Alexa McDonough were presented with the green chairs that occur



LAUREN HARPER (top), Justin (left) and daughter Rachel Harper brought the snow fort. Lower left: Justin Trudeau with Martha Hall Findlay at the Liberal Christmas party. Centre: performing artist Blake, (lower right) Nick Marucci; (front of right) Jim Fitzherry (middle) the Conservative. In a gesture of solidarity, Blais in a new meaning in a Manitoba province did by election, called because MLA Ben Maloway stepped down and was waterfalls in the federal NDP candidate to replace Blais in the House. As part of an election at the party, Winnipeg NDP MP Judy Wasylyuk-Lisa sold off pages of McDonough's old questions from question

his family like to be outdoors. A big activity is always tobogganing. The family builds an outdoor living room with a fireplace at the top of a toboggan hill. "We try and stay outside as long as possible," says Lauren Harper. "I think last year our record was 11 hours, from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m."

FLAKERTY FIGURES OUT HOW TO GET THE GYM TO HIMSELF

Now that the budget's been moved up to Jan. 25, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's budget announcement will have to be rebooked. For major things like a budget he gets a cut of the day, or the day before. When he delivered his last economic update, Flaherty says he went to the gym, when he had the place to himself; everyone else was in lock-up waiting it.

XMAS MUGS

An thing would down on the Hill for the holidays. Flaherty's gift shop had no normal Christmas stuff. The most popular one? It appears most popular says Christmas the parliamentary mug or glass. 30% and Bill staff even got a special 25 per cent holiday discount.

WOULD THAT BE SENATOR MEINER?

Word of the PM's Senate appointment meant that Rick Mercer's Facebook status, noting he "is wondering when the Senate will be closed." On MP Scott Brison, a fellow Vancouver New Democrat, quipped that does highlight a comedian on the Senate make it just more of a joke. ■

ON THE WEB: For more Ontario Outlook or to contact Michael Raphael visit michaelm.ca/mitchraphael

The next coalition? Why not Harper and Ignatieff?



ANDREW COYNE

If I were a supporter of Bob Rae, I'd be inclined to find it funny that Rae was out of the race to succeed Stéphane Dion as Liberal leader, you'll recall, by the remaining prospect of an election. The Harper government was sure to fall over the Jan. 27 budget, it was said. This was no time for a leisurely, five-month leadership race. We need a permanent leader, this instant. Hence Michael Ignatieff.

Well, now a year and a week since Ignatieff's what should we call it? Apparentment? Installation? Installation?—and what message has he been sending over since? That he will do everything in his power to ensure the budget is not delayed, the government does not fall, and above all that there is no election.

The Prime Minister's last pronouncement, over the office that the "big national parties" ought to work together "to fix the economy," have been met, not with the furor and excitement of last fall's tightrope has occurred not so long ago, but with an air of indifference. From Ignatieff's own with Harper. Then his top finance critics were dispatched to meet with the finance ministers, emerging afterwards to declare themselves flattered with hope at what they had heard.

Not that it will be any comfort to Rae, but I think Ignatieff has it mostly right. Confronted with their waste deficit since Confederation, without much in the way of political or programmatic, and with all of their well-advertised fundraising difficulties, the Liberals are in no condition to fight an election and he knows it.

Moreover, the present coalition that was supposed to be the alternative is clearly dead, if not expired. Ignatieff hardly bothers even to mention it anymore. He has read the polls, showing upwards of 60 per cent of the public hostile to the coalition taking power, announcing the Governor General were even

disposed to call upon it, of which there are some doubt.

The problem, from Ignatieff's perspective, is that his coalition partners seem unwilling to give him up. The more he pulls away, the more they work to clutch him to their greedy bosoms. "Of course," they wail, "of course, he has to stay that, but..." And then they remind everyone that his signature, along with that of every member of his caucus, is on that letter to the Governor General commending the Liberals to form a coalition government, in partnership with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois.

So even as the coalition leads to practical insignificance, Ignatieff must be concerned that the public will continue to associate him

with the first to pick a right with the NDP—to forget those to break from him. And the way to do that, achieving the second objective in the bargain, is to form a coalition with the Conservatives.

Well, not a coalition. Just an understanding, an arrangement, if you will, that the Liberals will not defeat the government—and that Harper will not dissolve Parliament—for some specified period, some months, a year, when he will ignore Ignatieff's calls to take to get party back in fighting order. Only by firmly ruling out an election will Ignatieff be able to avoid embarking the handclasp action of clutched down that doom of his government.

This would be a deal, not only to his party, but the country. At the end of the



Ignatieff needs to dissuade Harper from calling an election until the Liberals recover

his party with all the same. And if his coalition partners don't take their hands off him, the Conservatives surely will.

At the same time, for all of Ignatieff's anxiety to avoid an election, he can have little assurance that Stephen Harper still believes. Whatever responsibility Harper should bear for ignoring the crisis of recent weeks, he emerges from it increasingly recognizable, with a lead in some polls of 70 per cent or more. That may not hold—no poll shows the Greens closing the gap since Ignatieff's, yes, assumption—and the economy is obviously a wild card. But if he's in anything like the same position six weeks from now, he'll find some way to bring about his government's defeat.

So Ignatieff has two challenges: to break with the coalition once and for all, in a way that leaves no room for doubt in the public mind; and to somehow dissuade Harper from forcing an election. I think the answer

to such an agreement, that Harper and Harper to take him up on it—to rebalance his image as a pragmatic, consensus-seeking politician, to share the blame for any economic hardship that may be coming, to govern. And Ignatieff has one trump card: the Senate, whose the Liberals retain a majority. For now, then, Harper can stand it with them, and go on doing so until the balance tips in his favour, sometime in 2010. But he has to stay in power to do that, and in the process does serious harm to his reform credentials. What if Ignatieff were to send out a message to his party to pass Conservative legislation requiring senators to be elected?

However he goes about it, it's clear that Ignatieff needs Harper to help him solve the two riddles I have described. The only question is whether Harper needs him. ■

ON THE WEB: For more Andrew Coyne visit his blog at michaelm.ca/andrewcoyne



'I've been green since day one. I travel by reindeer, for crying out loud! Their dung fuels the furnaces at the North Pole.'

SANTA, COURTESY OF GERRY BOWLER, TALKS TO KENNETH WHYTE ABOUT CHRISTMAS LIGHTS, SHOPPING, RECESSIONS AND PERSONAL ATTACKS

Gerry Bowler teaches at the University of Mississippi and is working on his third book about Christmas. His previous books include *Santa Claus: A Biography* and *The World Encyclopedia of Christmas*. He arranged for Madonna to speak with Santa.

Q All we're hearing is bad news about people losing jobs and offices cancelling Christmas parties. Should we just wait off Christmas this year?

A Oh, not at all, no. It's actually in the times of economic depression and social turmoil that we need images.

Q But how can we afford the magic?

A Santa Claus always operates in comparison with personal resources, and the genius director of Santa is that he never outstrips the ability of parents to provide. The emperor's new job is to deliver things magically, and it's the magic that's more important than the particular gift.

Q So is this magic in figuring out ways to sell your kids what they want, or is it finding other ways to satisfy them?

A There are all kinds of ways of expressing love at Christmas that don't involve material things, and children are remarkably flexible in accepting and expecting and, if they're talked to in advance, I think they're seldom disappointed with what they get.

Q Do Santa elves have to cut back after the December downturn?

A It has happened. If we look at my experience during various wars there have been places that, because of conflict and so on, elves haven't been able to get into. During the American Civil War, for example, southern children were deprived of much that I would usually have brought them, but parents were able to encourage kids to defer their expectations to the time when the war was over. They were told that General Lee had asked me to take the toys and convert them into supplies for the injured troops.

Q But we're not in that kind of a situation at the moment.

A Oh, certainly not, but you can look at similar things like the Great Depression in the 1930s where things were rolled back. But the *holy fix* Santa was even more important then, and that was one of the golden ages of Santa Claus, with appearances in department stores, for example, that would eventually lead to department stores at Macdonald's Jack Frost.

Q Is it of any consequence to Santa that office parties are being canceled? Does Santa have a place in the office?

A No, he doesn't. Cheap imitations show up all the time, and I've often worry to read about what these counterfeits have gotten up to under the influence of too much eggnog.

Q Is there any personal evidence that Santa's going to be less of a presence this year?

A He's having mixed news. I know that generally—swelling his ego in malls and their parking lots—there doesn't seem to be

any kind of resistance of parents to let the shopping commence, at least not yet.

Q Is Santa himself any less visible in the places we see him before Christmas, as TV pitching products, or in movie theaters?

A Not that I can tell. Remember that this is not me, that's merely the photos, as it were, that are employed up by Madison Avenue. There's no sign my image is any less important to the economy than it has been in previous years. Whoever is nearest at hand to the umbrella industry, those people whose job it is to be affidavits on behalf of others who see in me a charming religious figure and thus a sign of continuity and legacy.

Q Are there the people who symbolize you in Florida a few years ago?

A That was a bit of a risk, certainly. There's always been a tendency since the Calvinist wing of Christianity to see a paranoid eye on Christmas and on me, but the staff that I'm seeing tends to come out of government offices, school systems. England is particularly under siege by their churches.

Q And who are their characters?

A Well, the other day in England a woman was told by an employee of the local city council that she had to take down her Christmas lights because Christmas lights were by definition an act of exorcism that might offend her neighbors, and when she complained the discovery that the local council had no such policy in place at all, but we see here the tendency to self-censor, to have messianic officials feel they're empowered to

ask for Christmas trees to be removed or for kids dressed in Santa Claus outfits not to be allowed at costume parties.

Q It's one thing to object to a nativity scene or some Christian symbol, but Christmas, right?

A It's getting worse and worse every year. **Q** There's another group of anti-Santa types out there who simply see Christmas as a capitalist plot, who take an anti-consumerist view of you and the season. Are they still out there in force?

A Oh, they're certainly in Winnipeg, where this is the world headquarters of the Boy Nothing Christmas, and in Victoria.

Q That's right in your backyard, right?

A At it, I'm afraid. I think they were planning on sending a mail this past weekend with anti-consumerist stuff. "I'm Walking in a Consumer Wonderland" was one of them. Yeah, for these people I'm the mall's puppet, I'm a heterosexual white messiah who should not be emulated among youth, but these people absolutely miss the point of a midwinter festival.

Christmas is a *holiness* festival. It's about religious meaning—deep religious meaning—with the whole tradition of wintertime, at the very darkest time of the year, so we're surrounded by light and heat and greenery and plenty. To ask that capitalism essentially collapse in December for the sake of some ecological or ethical drift is unreasonable. These attacks are really Marxist in origin.

If you go into the website of one of these groups the question is posed if we don't buy in Christmas won't a lot of retailers suffer, and the answer given is yes, and that's what they want, they want to destroy the retail industry and to rebuild a *fairer*, *greener* world out of the rubble.

Q The kids'll be really happy with that.

A Yeah, I'm a little bit of a cynic about that.

Q I've been reading recently about church attendance being up because of the economic times, and a lot of churches are opening strong attendance this Christmas. Is it more about church or Christmas or are that takes attention away from Santa?

A Not at all. Santa Claus is a quasi-religious figure. I have godparents like St. Nicholas. This is because of the movement in the Middle Ages that gave gifts brought by saints for the Christ child. Many churches will have Christmas trees in them, which are not as overly Christmasy as the ones in the homes in these services will have two levels of logos to contemplate on Christmas Eve. They'll have the nativity play and all the miracles associated with that, and they'll have the exorcism of a magical gift-bringer.

Q Is there any reason to expect, given the fact we're in, that people would be more likely to follow Santa's example and give of themselves? Would we expect more people to put money in the Salvation Army bins, or volunteer at charity dinners for the homeless?

A I think it depends on how long the recession lasts. The impulse to charity is critical during Christmas. Christmas has always been the great time of finding ways to distribute charity, and that will never disappear. I do worry, however, about the tendency by certain retail outlets and by malls to make it harder for organizations like the Salvation Army to operate on their premises.

Q You mean the anti-bell-ringing campaign that we've seen in recent years?

A Yeah, or those who feel that it's a religious thing and that they ought not to be excluded or that there are certain kinds of holidays that might legally fall on their hands. Whatever it is, it's certainly been harder for these groups to find places that will take them.

Q Santa always seems a little bit judgmental. There's a whole naughty and whole list dimension to his journey, and if he's going up receiving that this year, are they going to just think they're not as worthy?

A The judgmental aspect assigned to me has slackened off in the last hundred years. I don't even carry and I have more in long black business suits that I used to have to carry in the 19th century. The only thing that I might do is delay the visit to a house where a child is unreasonably misbehaved, but I certainly wouldn't put anything less under the tree.

Q The whole world's going green and one would expect that Santa, living in the North Pole, is aware of the effects of global warming that is changing your style of operation?

A I've been green since day one. I travel by reindeer, for crying out loud! Do you know how much changing a reindeer produces in the course of a year?

Q That's a lot of methane gas? You're contributing to the problem.

A No, that fails the mighty furnaces at the North Pole. Actually, I trip into postcard heat for most of the year.

Q There have been a lot of *Santa* movies in recent years. Do you take this as a backhanded compliment?

A Well, it's a backhanded compliment, and the fact that they are so deeply indebted ever further to the father figure of the world of people known to be the authentic Santa story shows just how deeply embedded the belief in me is in the culture. If you take a look at, say, the late 19th years of Santa movies, they're about as good as certainly the *Abrams* on 34th Street kind of approach about faith or not faith. We now

have all kinds of children attributed to me whom I don't have, daughters, sons I've not met and once a good one, or they're frustrated by the notion of how Santa might put on the magic from one generation to another. Whole 'n' folks, it's not me! I don't have children, I don't have successors, and interesting that you put on the rate and you're forced into some kind of involuntary lineage as Santa—or that when I retire, according to the CBC, I go to the Swiss hermitage—this is all pure pure nonsense.

Q Were there any great songs or movies of you during the Great Depression?

A There were no good movies, but the greatest addition of the 20th century to the canon of belief in me was the addition of a much-reinforced on the part of a Chicago department store that handed out flyers



The CBC insinuates that when I retire, I go to the Santa Senate. This is just pure nonsense.'

toward the end of the 1930s and altered the world to the presence of Rudolph, my hapless guide.

Q Just to sum up, you're a good shape, you're not going to be in that lineup for a while with the *com* computers and everything else?

A Not at all. I've been working out. I've been making the reindeer through these years, and it's going to be a great Christmas.

Q Anything special you'd like at a much?

A Oh, I don't know. I'm pretty short—

Ontario's big poverty plan: bill Ottawa



THE PLAN has hard targets, but where's the money coming from?

BY PETER BROWN TAYLOR • Putting a face on its promise to reduce poverty in Ontario, the McGowan government released "Beating the Cycle" earlier this month. Given the gathering economic storm, the poverty reduction plan seems timely. But while the proposal has drawn praise for setting measurable goals, whether those goals are reached is another matter. That's because the province is coming up on someone else picking up the tab.

The plan promises to reduce the number of children living in poverty in Ontario by 25 per cent within five years. If successful, it will bring 90,000 kids and their families up to within half of the provincial median income. For a single mother with two children, that would mean an income of \$22,000 a year. Ontario is the first province to set hard targets for reducing child poverty.

But how the province will reach its goal is a mystery. According to the plan, new spending by Ontario will amount to \$200 million. That covers a small increase at the Ontario Child Benefit, plus some educational support. If that doesn't seem sufficient for such an ambitious target, it's because Ontario doesn't expect to do most of the spending.

While the federal government had no role in setting the policy, the province is demanding that it do most of the work. It wants Ottawa to double the Working Income Tax Benefit and boost the National Child Benefit Supplement. It implemented in Ontario alone, those changes would cost federal taxpayers about \$1.3 billion. And yet its contribution is only responsible for Ontario to increase funding for a national program in just one province. The cost is thus closer to \$1 billion, or to times what Ontario has committed.

"We will do our part," Premier Dalton McGuinty boldly stated when he introduced the plan. It's like to expect his target, he can always blame Ottawa. ■

Europe's ban 'devastates' bear hunt

BY RACHEL MENDLESON • Killing polar bears for sport is becoming an endangered activity. Foreign countries can't stop Canadians from hunting the great white animals, but they can make it illegal for their own residents to kill bears here and bring the pelts home. That's exactly what an increasing number are doing. The U.S. outlawed the practice 10 months ago, and earlier this month the European Union followed suit, banning the import of polar bear trophies from two regions off the coast of Nunavut.

Survivor activists are cheering the move, but local communities on the shores of Bar In Bay and Kane Basin say Ottawa should have done more to save the sport hunting trade. According to Tom Allouso, who runs a hunting outfit out of Peard Inlet, "The ban will devastate the industry, probably kill it."

The hunt for sport hunting business has been in jeopardy for some time. The bears have come to embody what the world stands to lose due to global warming, despite the fact that the local say polar bear populations are rising. The irony is that harvest quotas will still be met, and as many bears will be killed as before. They'll just be killed through traditional harvesting rather than sport hunting. Allouso adds that he still gets a few American clients, but now they make arrangements to leave their pelts and trophies behind.



EUROPEANS can't bring pelts home, but the bears will still die

with local resources and stress in Canada.

Environment Minister Jim Prentice said he's pleased that the EU ban is only partial, and that it may be lifted as the future of the livelihood. The seven European hunters he has booked for this season—each of whom typically spends about \$100,000—may be among his last. "That will have a big impact on the community," he says. ■

The fall of the Salisbury Sopranos

BY COLIN CAMPBELL • Known as the local press as the "Salisbury Sopranos," the Tingley crime family is not what one would call discreet. Their compound, located in Salisbury, just outside of Montreal, N.B., is clearly marked by a large, purple billboard, which, aside from the skulls in the background, wouldn't look out of place on a Nevada highway. "The Tingley Compound," it reads, "What you see here... what you do here... what you hear here." STAN HARRIS

Not any more. Last week, 166 RCMP officers



MARKING their crime compound with a huge billboard didn't help

cornered the compound and seized several other locations, arresting eight Tingley family members and laying 57 charges, including "conspiracy to traffic in cocaine, opiates, marijuana, controlled tobacco, weapons and firearms, and being members of an organized crime group," says the police. The arrest capped a 14-month-long investigation which the police say was dogged by a lack of cooperation from witnesses who were intimidated by the notorious Tingley twins, 34-year-old Jonathan Roger and Rodney, who head up the clan. "Nobody wanted to mess with them," says RCMP Sgt. Maurice Corneau.

The Tingleys have become well-known locally for their escalating dispute with another local family, the Hoppers. In one incident earlier this year, Rodney's son Michael Tingley was charged with threatening and assaulting one of the Hoppers. Leading up to the investigation, the Tingleys grabbed the RCMP's attention that a number of Hopper-owned properties were mysteriously destroyed by fire (though none of the latest charges are related to arson).

Bringing down the family "is a big victory for us and the community at large," says Corneau. "It's well overdue." The locals are breathing a little easier, with the Tingleys behind bars and potentially facing lengthy prison sentences. As for the enormous billboard, that's been taken down too. ■



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AN AFGHAN SOLDIER surveys damage in Kandahar province (above); a world outflow of work in Kabul's Tarquinie Mountain enclave

THE GROWING STORM

There is progress in Afghanistan, but the danger is increasing



PAUL WELLS

On Dec. 5, a sunny Friday morning in Kabul, three SUVs pulled up to a bustling street corner near the north bank of the Kabul River. A dozen people tumbled out onto the sidewalk, and a

We stepped briskly away from the main street along a back lane split down the middle by a shallow V-shaped drainage ditch. Merchants' stalls lined the lane, a teen selling hand-hammered axe blades, another popping formidable quantities of poppers on an open fire. Our destination, a few dozen meters off the thoroughfare, was the Tarquinie Mountain redevelopment site, an ambitious attempt to reclaim one of Kabul's oldest districts as a haven for traditional arts, crafts and architecture

Only three years ago the whole area was buried in layers of accumulated trash to a depth of several meters. Sayed Miftah, a handsome German-born Afghan architect, told us. That's why former British diplomat Roy Stewart wrangled funding from the Aga Khan Foundation and Prince Charles to restore the neighborhood, known as Mard Khaneh, to its 18th-century glory. The land was cleared, crumbling buildings rebuilt. Elder craftsmen and a new generation of their students set to work carving intricate woodwork doors and window frames. Ceramic wall fixtures were rebuilt with local clays mixed with a plant fiber called pul-e-lach. Students started flowing to Tarquinie Mountain from across Afghanistan to learn the ancient techniques.

Last year the Canadian International Development Agency gave a grant of \$1 million to continue Tarquinie Mountain work as an architectural site, school for the arts, and high-end craft export business. They will seek like lofty centers in Afghanistan, a war zone and one of the world's poorest countries. But there is something magical about these elegant buildings tucked away from the damocrous treacherous Noisy city

can get by far long on survival and talent men alone. Every contemporary needs craft and love, something like the higher aspirations of the mind and heart. "Of course, this is good for all of Kabul," Hedayatullah Akbarzadeh, Tarquinie Mountain's head of engineering, told me. "Afghan people don't know their history. They need to see it. This place is the father and mother of all Kabul. Of all Afghanistan."

While the engineer spoke, Hoffman, a superbly well-connected diplomat with a long-lined grin and a fly-away shock of greying blond hair, stopped away to take a call on his cellphone. The ambassador listened more than he spoke and ended the call with a quiet, "Well, thanks for letting me know."

That night, after the rest of his had been properly notified back home, we learned that the call had been to inform Hoffman about the madhouse horns west of Kandahar that killed the 96th, 99th and 100th Canadian soldiers to die in Afghanistan.

The work of life and hope continues in Afghanistan. So does the work of unimaginable suffering. Each talk had down practitioners of unceremonious destruction. Even today, seven years into the mess, it is not clear who

is winning. If victory has any discernible meaning, we are nowhere close to being able to claim it. And a very dangerous year lies just ahead. Afghans will elect a new government in 2009. The Taliban and other insurgents will try to stop the voting. Drug lords will try to corrupt it. And a massive influx of American troops, perhaps 20,000 by 2010, will mark the arrival of a new American president determined to tip the balance of a stale-mated war.

Even soldiers who suggest the arrival of U.S. reinforcements worry about what will happen when they arrive. Many—though certainly not all—believe the level of violence will skyrocket in the summer that the heart of the campaign will be the country's south, including Kandahar, where most of the soldiers in the Canadian deployment are already stationed. It may be salutary violence, perhaps the war needs to get worse before it gets better. But one U.S. general put it this way:

"If you put three brigades in the heart of the Taliban south, the insurgents are gonna come from Kandahar, Larjan, the porous border in Pakistan, they're gonna come from far and wide. And you're going to see a level of violence that we have not seen in a long time. This

is not the Taliban that we all know and love. You know, one little IED [improvised explosive device] takes a wheel off a vehicle, everybody gets bumped up but they're all okay. You're going to be seeing world-class IEDs. You're going to be seeing [rocket-propelled grenade] fire that is incredibly accurate. You're going to be seeing mortar fire that is incredibly accurate. And my belief is, you're going to see new



THERE MAY BE 'A LEVEL OF VIOLENCE WE HAVEN'T SEEN'

weapons introduced into a theater."

I took this second trip to Afghanistan, a year after my first, as a guest of the Department of National Defense. My traveling companions were scientists and a trade task force from Washington. In just over a week in Kabul and Kandahar, we met with more than 40 high-ranking members of the Car-

abinieri, allied and Afghan militaries, representatives of the Afghan government and civil society and civilians and development workers from Canada and an array of NGOs. Most of our discussions were all the more to encourage candor.

A year ago, Western forces, increasingly supported by a homegrown Afghan army, were holding their own against insurgents, who were fighting a low-level guerrilla war of harassment against the Western and Afghan forces against local police and government. Development work was spotty and poorly coordinated. A year later it's as though the volume knob had been turned up on all of that.

Development work has markedly accelerated and there have been tentative steps toward better coordination. Roads are being paved, schools being built. Canada is distributing up to \$1 million worth of wheat seed to 5,000 farmers so they might not have to plant opium poppies. Our government is financing the rebuilding of Sarposa prison, the site of spectacular and deadly prison break in June, into perhaps the most secure and humane prison in Afghanistan. The professional and imagination of the Canadian public accounts I met at the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar were a source for special aid refuge in the security of the multi-governmental brick-and-mortar in Ottawa. Canada's civilian work in the south is led by Elissa Goldberg, a loquacious career civil

secret whose title—the 4th of the first official “Representatives of Canada in Kandahar”—is sewn in short form onto her body armour, as “THE BOSS.” Soldiers are told to treat the back with the deference a general officer would get. She frowns over her colleagues’ safety, but she spends more time bumping along the dangerous roads around Kandahar than most other civilians.

Gallagher has more discretion over her budgets than do many cabinet ministers in Ottawa. While she must account for her spending decisions, she is well clear of the leader cloud of so-called “accountability” that blots out today’s Ottawa ministers to news. “Don’t do anything and you won’t get into trouble.” In Kandahar the cost of inaction is far too visible for such nervousness. Gallagher will talk your ear off about what need. Her enthusiasm is infectious.

One constant guideline for the Canadian presence in Kandahar is to create doing by themselves what they can goal or enter the Afghan government to do. The other discipline: The Canadians have coordinated credible resources, whereas getting and holding the Afghan’s attention can be like trying to push stones uphill. There will not always be Canadians in Kandahar, and before they leave they have to instill some of the habits of a

democratic government in Afghanistan’s administration. Too much still rides on the personal attention of the local governor, who can be dedicated or corrupt. Rules and priorities need to evolve so Afghans can depend on their government for basic services even if a third-rank it is change.

And yet the whole conversation about government services is slightly surreal because the roads are holed-up and the country is riddled with insurgent violence. Every single NGO we met in Kandahar identified “security”—the local explanation for war—as its primary challenge. More so, but year’s standoff between allies and insurgents seems to be holding, but at a higher level of savagery.

Ahmad Bahman Wardak is Afghanistan’s defence minister, a towering bear of a man who, 25 years ago, was fighting the Soviet occupiers alongside many of the mujahideen who became the insurgents he now confronts. “Last year, in 2007, we thought we had experienced the bloodiest year ever,” he said in his Kabul office. “But this year, unfortunately, the level of violence is 30



KABUL MUST BE ABLE TO PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES

per cent to 40 per cent higher.” Wardak spent the first five years after the 2001 coalition invasion explaining that his Afghan National Army, which then stood at barely 10,000 underarmed troops with no modern equipment to speak of, could not ensure the country’s security. As late as 2006 he was pleading for Western help to train a 150,000-strong Afghan army. Today he is nearly getting his wish: the ANA is on track to hit 86,000 soldiers by next year and 114,000 by 2011. Soldiers from NATO countries rarely do anything new without their ANA colleagues. In 60 per cent of combined operations this year, Wardak said, the Afghans took the lead. “We have inflicted very heavy damage on the enemy leadership,” he said.



GOLDENROD (left), Wardak, instilling democratic habits

But that is mostly instilling the ingredients to more desperate measures, including the occasional use of roadside bombs that put killed six Canadians in eight days. And no matter how many insurgents the Afghan and Western troops kill or capture, more appear. Many come from Pakistan.

“I’ve got a 1,200-lbm open flask,” said Maj Gen. Matt de Krom, the newly arrived Dutch commander of Regional Command South, which includes Kandahar and the provinces on either side. The turbulent Pakistan dic-

dom a year ago, whose low point was the recent assassination of General Hamid, took the Pakistan authorities’ attention away from the border mountains for months. Now it is inevitable, violence in Afghanistan’s eastern and southern regions climbed.

In the last six months, NATO marshals in Afghanistan have tried to re-engage that Pakistan’s cooperation. When U.S. Gen. David McKiernan arrived in June to assume command of all NATO forces in Afghanistan, one of his first meetings was with Pakistan’s

chief of defence staff. Now they meet every month, and the two met with the head of Afghanistan’s army every two months. Half size, the Canadian ambassador, has begun regular meetings with Razaullah Mawla, Canada’s high commissioner in Islamabad. Len Edwards, the deputy interior of foreign affairs, was in Afghanistan when I was there. One item on his agenda was to begin coordinating a broader regional response to the Afghan conflict.

But open lines of communication can only accomplish so much. The Pakistan army’s heavy hand of tactics make it ill-suited to fight a counterinsurgency. And most of the country’s troops are on the eastern border with India, Pakistan’s eternal nemesis. “It’s not rocket science to know that if we can improve the relationship between India and Pakistan it will improve the situation here,” declared said. Unfortunately, the murderous attack on Mumbai by terrorists trained in Pakistan is driving those countries’ relationship in the other direction.

In the meantime, the open border helps ensure that there will always be more bad guys than NATO and the Afghan army can handle. Sometimes they fail to fill the gap. Mostly, somebody local who can spot suspicious behavior by outsiders who, being Pakistanis, aren’t even always identifiable from the locals. “Police, police, police,” Denis Theriault, the Indian Canadian brigadier general who commands Joint Task Force Kandahar, said. “That’s my number one worry. If you don’t have the cops you can’t hold the ground. And if you can’t hold the ground you can’t do anything else.”

Traditionally, Afghan police were just an extension of local warlord clans, ill equipped, unpaid except by bribes, and fabulously corrupt. On top of it all, since the insurgency

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began in 2002, Afghan National Police (ANP) officers have been the most vulnerable targets for attacks. More than 1,000 ANP officers have been killed this year alone.

NATO was slow to take an interest in the ANP's training. Some Western authorities still doubt the good faith of President Hamid Karzai's government in training the police. "You get all the Afghan leadership together, from Karzai on down," one senior NATO officer said. "Put 'em in Ghazni stadium [Karzai's main address venue] and

police squadrons hold the line and sit there. We bring them in to train alone, they fail," one trainer said. "Bringing the groups in, even if you need to train the group because of hot analysis and a couple of other problems, the rest of the group succeeds." Focused District Development is now key to a lot of other decisions about how to allocate resources in a theatre of war that's way too big for the NATO resources at hand. Military command

MORE THAN 1,000 POLICE HAVE BEEN SLAIN THIS YEAR



AFGHAN police survey the results of an attack making strides toward a professional force

ask them, 'Do you want a competent, professional, dedicated police force?' And give them some sort of truth serum. My guess is that fewer than 30 per cent of them would say yes. Making decent, competent police force is how these guys make their money. People say, 'Clean up the police.' It's a cop-er. We need to clean up the government."

Despite this atmosphere of mutual neglect, Western authorities have finally begun making strides toward training and professionalizing the police. One is a salary reform: police are now paid at the same rate soldiers are, so taking bribes is no longer a necessary for simple survival. And they're now paid by electronic transfer using personalized smart cards—so the pay goes to the individual cop rather than to his boss or the local warlord.

The other big innovation is effective training. Western authorities wasted too many years training Afghan police one by one, teaching an officer new techniques—only beginning with basic literacy—and then sending him back to a corrupt and corrupting provincial station. Last year the westerners introduced Focused District Development, which trains every man in a police station together, while members of an elite national

police prefer not to clear an area of Taliban unless the police in that area have gone through FDD, because they're reluctant to be able to keep the Taliban out later.

In Kandahar, where many members of the ANP have been trained by members of Canadian police forces, Product 9 has doubled its use of FDD discovery this year. In Canada we only hear about IEDs when they kill our soldiers. But most victims of insurgent violence are Afghans. NATO soldiers hope the insurgents' initial interest in military conflict, which they can't win, to IEDs, which they can't target, will cut them local support. "The Taliban have lost ground with the local population," one soldier insists. "They don't deliver any services. The only service is, 'We'll give me all so I'm going to hang you from a lamp post.'"

But some Western authorities think even

a U.S.-reinforced NATO contingent and a swiftly improving Afghan army and police corps won't be enough to end the standoff with the insurgents. That has some senior NATO officers mulling a dangerous and controversial option: recruiting and arming local tribal militias to help out. There is no formal plan along these lines, but we heard the option discussed at senior levels of the NATO leadership.

We also heard it discussed, especially in the south, where tribal affiliations are especially complex. Arming or paying one faction could have repercussions nobody could predict or control. "On a scale from smart to dumb," one officer said, holding his hands apart in front of him, "arming the tribes is our best." He nodded at the "dumb" and walked away.

Anyway, it was harder when this trip to measure the room for optimism in Afghanistan than it was a year ago. The civilian and military resources Canada and its allies are deploying far exceed anything we have put to the task before. Realistic optimism is on the way. But the challenge is growing too.

Meanwhile, soldiers keep dying. One of the many who have had to become authorities on that subject is Warner Officer Colin Clancey. The 56-year-old, though still 31-year-old believes he is the first baggage deployed to a combat theatre in that role by the Canadian Forces since the Second World War. Since only two soldiers in Kandahar Air Field know how to play the pipes—the other is a truck driver—Clancey used to teach—they have been kept busy playing at the camp ceremonies when transport aircraft fly soldiers overseas home. Not only to Canada, but in the U.S., Britain, Australia. Clancey has played at 20 camp ceremonies in his nine months at Kandahar.

Soldiers from every country come, if their operational duties permit, to attend the camp ceremonies. When the others who died on Dec. 5 went home, 2,000 of their comrades were on hand. Clancey sometimes plays Amazing Grace or songs associated with specific regiments, but this time he played a new song he wrote in November, *Thank You Kandahar*. "It's a funeral march, so it's very somber at the start," he said. "But as it progresses, I tried to give it a more positive tone, so it has elements of hope and joy at the end. As if to express the hope that all this isn't in vain." ■



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SUDAN: RETIRE THE TEA POTS, BRING ON THE MUSS

After 25 years of strict Islamic law, Sudan is returning to south Sudan. Under a ceasefire agreement between the Khalifa north and military Christian south, that region will begin legally brewing and serving beer in the pent, and they'll be able to import beer to thirsty drinkers in the north. Brewing giant SABMiller is opening the new brewing, and spokeswoman notes the deal is "a great step" to "lighten, crispier beer—a legend."

Democracy is fine, until you lose

BY PATRICIA TREBLE • Last week's election on the English Channel island of Sark should have been a time of celebration for Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay. Since the laborious brothers moved onto the nearby islet of Brechney in 1991 and began pumping millions into the local economy, they have pushed Sark toward democracy through a series of legal challenges against its feudal power—the hereditary seigneur who leases the island from the Crown for \$1.50 a year, and the legislature, until now controlled by



SARK: When their candidate lost, the Barclays laid off 140 workers

the holder of 40 manors originally parceled out during the reign of Elizabeth I.

However, the Barclays' success in denying Sark wealth's ascendance as the ballot box. Only two of their favored candidates won places in the 18-seat legislature, known as the Chief Pleas. Among the losers was estate manager Simon Delaney, who warned: "There's a very real fear that's going to be paid for this." The next day, the Barclays shut down their businesses on the island, including four hotels and a pub, and laid off 140 workers, one-quarter of Sark's population.

The Barclays had wanted their preferred candidates to push through a modernization plan that included introducing electric vehicles and even a heliport on the quiet, rural, 541-hectare island that currently has no cars, paved roads or streetlights. Instead, the electoral results are being interpreted as a rejection of the brothers' high-handed methods, which included labeling their now-vicious traditional power opponents as "dangerous to Sark's future." Though Barclay lawyer Gordon Davies expects the businesses will eventually reopen, new investments, currently around \$10 million a year, won't be flowing into "a place where there is such an anti feeling against them." Sir George Michael Beaumont, will the lord of the Chief Pleas, doesn't sound worried. "We've negotiated for 400 years. Life goes on."

Israeli mobs: Holy Land or gangland?

BY SUSAN MORAHEIM • At the funeral for assassinated Tel Aviv mob boss Yisroel Alperin last month, one of his sons vowed a special blood-soaked revenge for his father's death. "We will find the man who did this," promised Omer Alperin. "I'll find this man to God. He won't have a grave because I'll cut off his arms, his head, and his legs."

Days after the gruesome statement was made, the Israeli government ordered an immediate crackdown on organized crime, as a quickly developing all-out gang war is the face of mounting tensions. Israel's police are struggling to overcome growing concern they are powerless in the face of the growing violence.

Nasim Alperin was slain on Nov. 17 when his car was bombed on a residential street. Following the killing, the former chief of police for Israel's national police, Moshe Mirmor, wrote in the Jerusalem Post that he worried the assassination would spark a "major blood feud," and civilians could get caught in the crossfire. Over the last three years, increasing violence between crime groups has claimed the lives of at least eight civilians and dozens of gangsters.

So far, the police crackdown has produced dramatic results. In the last week, four mob bosses were killed, including Ben Ami Mili, an explosives expert who was killed in a car bomb two years ago by Alperin's son Omer. At a restaurant, Mili was suspected of orchestrating Alperin's assassination. He and nine others were charged last week with possession of a semi-automatic 7.65mm Beretta pistol with a silencer, and conspiracy to commit crime. Police also arrested Alperin's older brother, Nasser, who was thought to be the most likely to organize a revenge attack, along with 18 others during a raid on a cult.

For now, Tel Aviv remains unusually quiet. But locals know the fight to uphold a crime family's honor can only be won with more blood. Alperin's sister Shoshana, for one, is calling for it to be called. "God willing, those who killed Yisroel will have the same thing done to his children," she said following her brother's assassination. "Kill, and be killed." ■

Russia's hate crime epidemic



WHITE SUPREMACIST skinheads training for trouble in Russia

BY RAHEL HENDERSON • With their hooded hats, beaten-down shirts and V-neck sweaters, the young men assembled this week in Moscow for 20 murders and 12 attempted murders don't look like traditional skinheads. But the group of seven, who ranged between six and 30 years each, apparently targeted non-Slavic migrants in the 2006 and 2007 elections, reinforcing Central Asian, Caucasian—as one correspondent put it, "people who did not look white"—in streets and pedestrian tunnels, often videotaping and posting the events online.

Though the brutality of the hate crimes perpetrated by this gang is remarkable, their existence is anything but. In Russia, xenophobic violence is becoming increasingly commonplace, and white-nationalist organizations are often to blame. According to the Moscow Bureau of Human Rights, between January and October 2008 there were 113 violent incidents nationwide, up from 74 for all of 2007. Just last week, the severed head of a Tajik worker was found in a dumpster outside a council building in western Moscow. A group calling itself the Moscow Organization of Russian Nationalists took responsibility for the crime in an email, reportedly telling it is "a warning to officials that the issue will happen to them if they do not stop the flow of immigration."

Part of the problem, say human rights groups, is the hesitancy of authorities to classify offenses as hate crimes, and of judges to issue significant sentences. And in the face of the economic downturn, some experts predict the situation could get even worse. Russians have a tendency to increase ethnic tensions, but in Russia, "the institutions that would restrain most violence are much weaker than they are here," says University of Toronto professor Matthew Light. "It's a kind of multiplier effect." ■



MIZRAHI: Trying to stop an all-out gang war in Tel Aviv

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ASPER overestimated his stock was "significant" in value when it was at \$2.50.

The first two reasons for Carwest's plunge are no fault of its own. Readers and viewers are abandoning newspapers and conventional

But it's *Asper's* largest argument that's causing him the biggest headache. It took place in January of last year, when Comcast gold-plated a big chunk of Alliance Atlanta to get its hands on popular specialty TV channels such as Fox Networks, HBO TV and Show

When the deal was first struck, Asper said he liked it because it put his fate in his own

hands. But ironically, one of the main reasons for structuring the deal in such a complex fashion was because Asper (60) has TV hold-ups were underwritten by the market at the time. Now they're worth even less. "The problem is," says Playd, "that deal was struck in better times. Now we're in much worse economic circumstances, so deals like this can go sour." Indeed, when you read the Dominion Bond Rating Service report it becomes clear

CANWEST'S gross debt ratio is double the industry average



that Canwest's debt, which now sits at about \$1.7 billion, is the real albatross around Asper's neck. Dominion's report predicts that the "ongoing deterioration of the advertising market" will be so severe that, as a group, Canwest's various media holdings could stop making

ALTMAN FIGURES CANWEST HAS ABOUT A 37 PER CENT CHANCE OF DEFAULTING

money for their plants, "which could put Canwest Media into a negative cash-flow position by the end of fiscal 2009." It would be a disaster that could seriously compromise Canwest's ability to pay its debt. Last year, Canwest was expected to raise close to \$1.5 billion by selling off Newnet's Toronto assets. That would have gone a long way toward reducing the debt burden, but Asper never got an offer he considered to be adequate.

Canwest may soon need cash desperately, and so the company's owners, it's rumoured, are going to get it. The company is circulating correspondence—a has-on down the physical size of its newspapers, reduced the National Post's distribution in the West, and announced the elimination of 260 jobs just last month—but Dominion says that likely won't be enough to keep cash flow from declining if revenues keep going down. Asper could start selling off assets, but if he were to sell off holdings such as Newnet's Tor, he'd have to live at the bedside post. He's even rumored to have

considered another option, to buy up all of Canwest's outstanding shares and take his company private, but again, that would require him to get financing.

There is always the option of raising cash by borrowing more money (assuming Canwest could find a willing lender), but previous lenders have set strict limits on how much the company can borrow. Canwest Media is currently managed to stay that limit by negotiating with creditors to swap up its allowable total debt-to-EBITDA ratio from 5 to 6.75 by next August. However, Dominion worries that if the economy keeps getting worse, "the company's constraints could erode faster than an ice cream cone in a heat wave." Dominion has good reason to worry right now, of all the major publishing and media companies in Canada and the U.S. that are going bankrupt in its report, only Liberty Media, Clear Channel Communications and Tribune Company have higher levels of debt, as measured by the gross debt-to-EBITDA ratio, while Canadian media such as Bell Canada have levels around the industry average of three. Ironically, on the very day Dominion's report came out, Tribune, which had the highest debt ratio at 10.6, declined bankruptcy.

Indeed, if Canwest can't borrow more money, that could leave only the option of last resort: defaulting on the company's debt—which would almost certainly lead to bankruptcy. Could it really happen? Edward Altman, professor of finance at the Stern School of Business at New York University and one of the world's most respected corporate bankruptcy experts, says yes. Back in 1967, Altman invented an indicator that can predict corporate bankruptcy with a high degree of accuracy, called the Altman Z-score. When applied to Canwest, he told Madman that this strictly by the numbers

analysis indicates that Canwest has about a 37 per cent probability of defaulting on its debt within five years.

That means Canwest has a better than 60 per cent chance of weathering the storm, but those odds aren't high enough for some. In late November, shortly after the company announced a massive 15 billion write-down on goodwill and broadcast licenses, respected drop risk investment manager (and Michael finally there in the towel) The Investment Company, ABC Funds, specializes in buying up the stock of undervalued companies and waiting for them to bounce back, so he's not scared off easily. But after first buying into Canwest at about \$15 nine years ago and then watching almost all of his investment evaporate, Michael has stopped waiting for the bounce. In a note to clients he explains that with 25 per cent of his revenue coming from advertising, Canwest is particularly vulnerable to the looming recession. He adds that he originally believed that "in the event of a serious downturn, Canwest could have sold Newnet's Tor," but now the Australian network has been sold cheap, and he doubts it could be sold. In the end, he writes, "We made the difficult decision and sold our position in Canwest. We will look to redeploy the capital into less economically sensitive positions with cleaner balance sheets, better cash flow and greater dividend income."

Not everyone is giving up, however. Peter Weiss, president of Fairfax Financial Holdings and one of the most active financial minds in Canada, seems to be standing by Canwest. In fact, Weiss keeps swooping up more and more of the company's stock in every opportunity. His company now owns 22 per cent of Canwest's stake in its various operations—and he may know something that other investors don't. After all, Weiss not only successfully predicted today's general financial crisis, he made more than billion dollars off it through savvy investments in credit default swaps. If he's right about Canwest, and it pulls through its current dips, he could be richly rewarded. If that happens, Asper will be proven right, and the naysayers will be kicking themselves in disgust. But it's a pretty big "if." For now, "they would be hard to recommend as a buy," says one Toronto analyst. "There's a lot of value in the properties, but there has to be some hope of a recovery." ■

POLITICIAN FORCED FROM LATE-NIGHT OFFICE

Mayor Blanca Figueroa of the Los Angeles-area town of South El Monte has been criticized by councilors for her undisciplined work habits. Not only does Figueroa spend all day at city hall, but she remains there well into early morning. Citizen liability and safety issues stemming from this major working deep into the night, town council passed a curfew ordaining her home at 11 p.m. Figueroa has condemned the measure as unfair.



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What you don't know can hurt a lot



STEVE MARCH

As in often the case in the complicated and opaque world of hedge funds, it is not yet entirely clear what happened at Sextant Capital Management. But if the allegations levelled by the Ontario Securities Commission are accurate, it seems something like the plot of a Dan Aykroyd movie from the '80s.

According to the OSC, a former director by the name of Otto Spork set up private investment vehicles back in 2006 called the Sextant Strategic Opportunities Hedge Fund. About 240 Canadian investors, most of them in Ontario, funnied about \$22 million to Mr Spork and his associates at Sextant. And for the moment, they have been very, very happy. At the end of November, Sextant was boasting a 170 per cent return on the past 12 months, and is showing 730 per cent returns since the fund's inception a few years ago.

In the midst of historic market crash, Sextant had been the toast of the investing world. In September, when the industry handed out its annual awards in Toronto's hip Distillery District, Sextant took home the award for best overall return for funds with more than \$25 million under management. All this has made the investors at Sextant very rich indeed. Performance fees for the month of November alone were said to be \$1.5 million.

Also, it seems Sextant wasn't quite the success it appeared. The OSC recently conducted a routine compliance review to make sure all the rules were being followed, and what they found wasn't pretty. According to the OSC, a about five per cent of Sextant's assets were invested in a pretty standard mix of stocks, cash, private equity and derivatives contracts. The rest of its portfolio consisted of investments in two private companies with ownership stakes in steel in Iceland. Spork has lately moved to Iceland, and reportedly envisioned these glaciers as the foundation of a business empire, wary around the world. These companies have no revenues, virtually no profits, and no prospect for operations in the foreseeable future. And yet, according to Sextant, their value has surged by 984 per cent in the matter of years since the Sextant fund was launched.

The OSC found no independent evidence to substantiate the claim that these Icelandic firms were worth close to 10 times what Sextant

paid for them. And since hedge funds like Sextant don't have to regularly reveal their results and key holdings like conventional mutual funds do, nobody noticed that it hadn't produced raked financial statements since 2007. For now, the OSC has barred Sextant from acting as fund manager, thus preventing regulatory hearings in the weeks and months ahead.

It's important to note that Spork denies any wrongdoing, and has vowed to fight the charges. But it's fair to say that it does nothing for the increasingly troubled image of



Sextant invested tens of millions in Icelandic glaciers

the hedge fund industry. Sextant wasn't even close to the biggest scam to shake the investment world last week. That honour goes to Bernard Madoff, the legendary 76-year-old New York-based manager whose once stellar reputation now lies in ruins. Madoff is accused of operating a US\$60-billion Ponzi scheme, taking advantage of gaps in the regulatory framework to lull a fortress of wealthy investors—from billionaire celebrities to institutional banks. Madoff didn't have to report his activities to the SEC, so they went undetected for decades. The damage is enormous.

Hedge funds operate private investment pools that work much like mutual funds except that they can use debt and derivatives to leverage up their holdings and use risky strategies like short selling that are off-limits for conventional fund managers. The strategies are complex, arcane, secret, and often very secret, because hedge funds are exempt from the usual requirements for transparency that apply to public companies and mutual funds. Therein lies the problem.

The hedge fund industry exploded in size and profitability over the past decade, all the while claiming that its investors are rich and smart enough that they don't need the protections afforded to ordinary investors. Cases like Sextant and Madoff eloquently demolish that rationale. After all, Sextant's sophisticated investors appear to have given their money to a former dentist who used it to buy frozen water in Iceland. Even the SEC considered the notoriously secretive Madoff one of the wise men of Wall Street, and censured him on regulatory issues.

Hedge fund managers insist that too much oversight will kill their industry, and deprive investors of the opportunity to make stellar returns. When the market goes steadily crashing, no one was inclined to disagree and the hands-off approach prevailed. But the ground is shifting. Securities regulators from around the world are now deep in talks aimed at applying a tighter leash. The idea isn't popular with the industry, but it's long overdue.

If there is one critical lesson of this financial meltdown it's that the markets are more interconnected than ever, and surprise in a handful of large funds can send huge shock waves around the world. It was not long when hedge funds were only fringe players. Now they represent hundreds of billions of dollars in under-regulated capital with the potential for devastating surprises.

These funds are private businesses, but they are operating in the public marketplace like private car owners operate on public highways. When a driver fails to maintain his car properly or drives too fast, the lives of everyone on the road are put at risk. That's the basis for the whole Motor Vehicle Act, yet for years hedge funds have escaped scrutiny simply by arguing that they are such good drivers they need not follow the same laws as everyone else.

Most hedge fund managers are smart, honest, and worth every penny they make. But this crisis has revealed for many investors, and those painful lessons leave a lasting legacy. The markets work best when transparency is maintained, secrecy minimized, and everyone is playing by the same rules. ■

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Weston goes on the hunt for bargains

BY ANNE HINGSTON • While most competitors spend, George Weston Ltd. is going on a shopping spree. It has added to the country's largest food merchant a fresh with cash after its \$466-million October spinoff of Nelson Dairy and last week's \$2.5 billion sale of its U.S. fresh bakery division. Weston now has \$2 billion to go bargain hunting with, CEO Gailen Weston told analysts in a conference call last week. As for details, he was very vague, saying that they could spend "in bits" on one big deal or even on a giant deal—adding a jolt to the proverbial investor's looking in the steel sector.

Industry watchers expect the company to acquire as core businesses of baked goods and/or food retailing. It already dominates the frozen baked goods sector in Canada, says one, as reported in U.S. division, Maple Lane Bakers, would make sense. On the supermarket side, Safeway-Canadian Jimmy Patzart's Dominion Food Group are viewed as prospects, though Weston's 82 per cent interest in Loblaw Companies, Canada's dominant chain, would in turn compete them. However, there's also talk of purchasing a luxury goods purveyor, given the Weston family's track record as owners of Canada's Holt Renfrew and Selfridges in the U.K. One buy-side analyst also noted: "They like to be number one in every category; to buy a number one player in the luxury category is big dollars, even if it's distressed." Weston's appetite and so big searching new spots on the back burner don't speak much that George Weston would take special interest or buy on the Loblaw Co. stake, a doesn't own big specialty food store. Loblaw's stock to shoot up by almost 10 per cent. Of the two prospects, the privatization of George Weston would be more likely, says Capital analyst Ryan Gallagher, who last week.

In the meantime, the billionaire is acting like a kid in a candy store about the prospective bargains on offer. "We never had \$2 billion to spend before," he said. "He seemed giddy," reports an analyst. In the current buy-or-maker, it's a totally rational response. ■

Never, ever mess around with Barbie

BY CLARKE GEORGE • Nobody messes with Barbie. Not a bunch of darts, modifed having dolls with laser eyes and posy lips called Bratz; and certainly not MGA Entertainment, the maker of those dolls. On Dec. 3, after a bitter, four-year legal battle between MGA and Mattel over ownership of the Bratz can exist, a U.S. district judge ordered MGA to cease production on its wildly popular toy line at once, just in time for Christmas.

Things have been looking grim for MGA since July, when a California jury ruled that Camille Reiser, the creator of Bratz, was technically employed by Mattel, maker of Barbie, when he originally designed the line (Reiser claimed he had been working freelance at the time). The jury determined that Mattel was a rightful owner of the Bratz brand, which has reaped up hundreds of millions in sales since it launched in 2003. Once awarded the damage, in August, a separate jury awarded Mattel \$100 million in damages for copyright infringement and breach of contract. Within a month's ending, MGA is required to shut down its entire Bratz operation, although dolls will remain on store shelves for now.

If MGA CEO Isaac Lurie has anything to say about it, the fight isn't over. Lurie said in an official statement that he intends to appeal the decision. "We will seek to stay enforcement of this order until our appeal is resolved so we can maintain the over 3,000 people that MGA employs and continue to give our consumers a product they desire."



BARBIE MAKER Mattel says it owns Bratz. The courts agreed.

For the time being, though, Mattel is in the enviable position of holding the fate of Barbie's nemesis in its hands. In a recent report, Mattel said it was mulling over its options, which include adapting the Bratz line as its own, or simply letting it die. This much the toy giant has made clear: there is only space for one queen bee in the toy aisle. ■

Big banks keep cuts for themselves

BY JARON KIRBY • Every Canadian bank claims to be a "leader" like the decision by the Big Five not to match the Bank of Canada's interest rate cut last week—for the second time in recent months—has left angry Canadians fuming that the banks should try following for a change.

The surprise move by Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney to tug the key lending rate by 75 basis points to 1.5 per cent, the lowest in half a century, was meant to provide a jolt to the increasingly moribund Canadian economy. But in the days after the cut, Canada's largest banks announced their private



CARNEY KEEPS lowering rates, but banks are starting to rebel.

rate by just half a percentage point, to 3.5 per cent. It was the same story in October, when the banks refused to match the Bank of Canada's half-percentage point cut. In that case, the banks wouldn't budge until Ottawa offered to take \$75 billion worth of mortgages off their

hands. (Ottawa has since upped its mortgage purchase program to \$75 billion.) While the banks argue the financial crisis has driven up the cost of borrowing, making it unprofitable for them to match the Bank of Canada's rate cuts, their moves have elicited consumers' ire and anger, it seems like the rates the banks are borrowing at are going down, while the rates for regular folks hold steady. For instance, while the banks' prime rate has fallen from six per cent to 5.5 per cent since January 2009, the rate on a five-year closed mortgage has actually gone up slightly from 6.45 per cent to 6.75. Some people have launched Facebook protest pages calling for the banks to get in line. "The public needs a break from the banks," wrote one.

"They make enough money already." Paul Besada, a professor of economics at the University of British Columbia, says the banks may be right to hold off on rate cuts, if it makes them healthier and more able to lend money over the long run. But, he warns, by doing so they could be undermining the Bank of Canada's efforts to help the economy. "If the banks are not following the cue, then the whole aspect of what the Bank of Canada wants, which is to aggressively get people out there spending again, may not work." ■

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THE MILITARY'S NEW FOCUS on fuel economy will save lives by reducing the number of attacks on tankers, such as this 2007 ambush in Iraq

LEAN, GREEN WAR MACHINE

Suddenly, the military is looking into hybrid tanks and solar power

BY MICHAEL FRISCOLANTI • The final slide in Dana Nolin's token PowerPoint presentation is an overhead photograph of the Pentagon, the famous five-sided headquarters of the U.S. military. It's a pretty standard shot, the kind you see on posters and T-shirts all across Washington. Except for two things: the solar panels on the roof and the wind turbines near the parking lot.

The slides' themes are lean, of course. But the message Nolin is trying to convey is very real: "If we don't learn from five years, then I've failed," says the retired army colonel, who now advises his former employer in its pursuit of energy-efficient technologies. "We are only limited by our imaginations."

Like most soldiers, Nolin was not a born environmentalist. An artillery officer who served in the First Gulf War, he spent his career hugging the front lines, not near the mess hall. In the Florida move operation, he was stationed at the army's Rapid Equipping Force, a special unit that fast tracks high priority supply, when an urgent memo arrived from

Iraq. The general who sent it didn't ask for more men or more manpower. He needed a "self-sustaining energy solution" to replace the gas-guzzling diesel generators used at American bases. Saving the planet wasn't his concern; he wanted to save his troops from being ambushed as they delivered fuel to their comrades. It just so happened that the proposed solution—solar panels and wind turbines—accomplished both objectives at the same time.

As soon as he read that memo, Nolin realized what all military leaders are beginning to understand: managing a variable oil price and uncertain climate change, the next generation of warfighters must be lean, mean—and green. They're not men, they are machines. But the Pentagon was still looking down at the ground, not up at the sky. It was only when the war in Iraq began to drag on that the military's attention quickly became the matter of military lines. Consider included: Welcome to a new age of hybrid tanks, fuel-efficient Humvees and bio-generators that transform trash into power.

The military's sudden love affair with the earth can be almost entirely attributed to one thing: high oil prices. After decades of relative stability, the cost of a barrel of crude nearly tripled to US\$140 in the year of 2007 and the summer of 2008. The price

has since dropped significantly, but these oil shocks wreaked havoc on military finances. In the U.S. alone, where the army, navy and air force consume an estimated 340,000 barrels of oil per day (yes, you read that correctly: per day), the Pentagon's fuel bill has skyrocketed. In 2007, the Defense Department spent a reported \$16 billion on petroleum products, up from \$7.8 billion in 2005. That year, the cost is expected to reach more than \$16 billion. The Canadian Forces have been hit just as hard. During the 2007-'08 fiscal year, the fleet fuel bill was approximately \$125 million. Last year, it jumped to \$135 million. The Forces are so concerned about the cost of oil that they recently created a new position, the directorate of fuel and lubricants, to try to track consumption and oversee research into alternate options, such as biofuels and ethanol.

However, the purchase price of crude isn't even half its true cost. After filling up at the pumps, militaries must store a guy's millions more to transport and protect the fuel. Added to a recent tank fleet report prepared for the Pentagon, a gallon of gasoline that is originally purchased for 51 cents another \$42 is delivered, not to mention another \$10 to \$15 for the tank's own maintenance, not to mention the cost of the fuel itself. The price of the single gallon of crude enters into the hundreds of dollars when it's loaded

byland to a remote Forward Operating Base in war zones like Iraq (don't mention the innumerable civilian blood if that convoy is stretched along the way). To help understand this "fully busified" cost of fuel, the tank force urged the U.S. military to create a separate mission soon from purchase to pump. Only then, the report says, will the brass realize just how much money is wasted so that convoys can be re-roadminded and then flow with better water.

In the meantime, defense officials are on the lookout for the latest and greatest in energy-efficient technology. It may be a few more years before hybrid tanks patrol the deserts of Kandahar, but dozens of other car-

"I think that the military actually is doing a fair bit more than the public realizes," says Edward T. Morehouse, a researcher at the Institute for Defense Analysis. "The largest solar array in the country was built at Pacific Air Force base as part of a public-private partnership. The largest geothermal installation was made as a public-private partnership by the U.S. Navy."

The Canadian military's striking progress, too, DND is responsible for an incredible 40 per cent of the federal government's total greenhouse-gas emissions, but over the past decade, those emissions have steadily declined. In 1999, the military released 1,236 kilotons of CO₂ equivalent, but by last year that num-

ber plus a called "Green Clean Air."

If DND officials need more ideas, they may want to call Dan Nolan. Among the technologies he is now promoting is a foam spray insulation that seals tents, blocking in cool air and reducing energy use by up to 80 per cent. Retired U.S. colonel Jerry Warner can offer up even more options. His company, Defense Life Sciences, has built a mobile laboratory greenhouse that grows coffee grounds, soybeans and other garbage into the equivalent of low-grade propane. "Used in Iraq, this invention solves two problems in one swoop: it gets rid of waste and creates alternative energy." These days, there seems to be a converging cast between environ-

mental and military objectives, which previously had been thought to be mutually exclusive. "Warner says from his Virginia office. "If you look at the kinds of operations of the future, there is a tremendous value afforded to capabilities that include environmental language: self-sustaining and renewable." It's an interesting twist, and if it survives for some strange bedfellows. When Warner's company issued its first press release, it showed up on *Iron-Army.com*. "I never would have expected that," he says.

Neither would most people. But the more Western militaries pursue a philosophy that matches the colour of their flagpoles, the better life could be for everyone. In the years to come, don't be surprised if it's the armed forces—bracing for the battles of an oil-free future—that teach the rest of us how to decrease our carbon footprints. It certainly wouldn't be the first model for military solution adopted by mainstream society. After all, the military did play a key role in inventing the Internet. "We've heard the phrase about 'military excellence' being an experience," Nolan adds. "There is a tendency to think of military guys as dull blunt instruments, yet nobody is more imaginative, and nobody is more used to being put in severe situations and having to sort it out for themselves." ■

AFTER TRANSPORTATION COSTS ARE FACTORED IN, THE MILITARY CAN PAY MORE THAN \$100 A GALLON FOR GAS



WINDTUNNELS such as the Tactical Tank to Energy Converter (left) and land sailing boats can help save energy.

ting edge designs are in the works. In the U.S., the air force is experimenting with "blended wing bodies," a sleek new design that has the potential to reduce fuel consumption by up to 10 times. Unmanned aerial vehicles are a top priority, too. They require two-thirds less fuel than a typical fighter jet, and they can stay in the sky for 10 hours without a refuel (or a bathroom break). At Georgia Tech University, researchers are working on a revamped version of the armored vehicle, one that weighs less and consumes less, but still provides all the necessary protection against roadside bombs.

When it starts to become clear. Among their many projects, army researchers are trying to supply front-line troops with ready-to-eat food packages that don't require fuel for food coatings. The army is working on "high power density water guns" that can power fleets on half the fuel. And at Quantico, Virginia, 75 per cent of the U.S. naval base's energy now comes from four massive wind turbines.



SANTA VS. PEKIE BOB: A CHRISTMAS SHACKDOWN
 Jonathan Entbomberg, who was playing Santa Claus at the annual "Santa Paws" charity event in New Jersey, got supply chain, faced the prospect of painful rabies shots after an attack by killing, a cross between a house cat and a bobcat (called a "pekies bob") he saw became alarmed when he saw some dogs. Santa had to fight the cat for five minutes while it clamped on his wrist. Berry's owner later produced valid rabies vaccination certificates.

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BOSCH

THE RECESSION THAT SAVED CHRISTMAS

Lean times, some find, are connecting them to the real meaning of the holidays BY KEN MACQUEEN AND CATHY GULLI

Yes I have to go back to Audrey and Owen Freeman's lives to the Christmas of 1964 to find a time such as this—when bleak circumstances should doom the spirit of the season to wander lost in a fog of loneliness, depression and worry. It was their second Christmas together. They had just had their first daughter in a bare apartment in Toronto—noisy, dingy, a sliver of the city when she moved there from the outpost of Carmichael, Nfld., she says. “I’d had been going to the moon at the time, I wouldn’t have been more scared!” Owen was laid off just before Christmas. Their wife’s spirit went into the next year just. They were too proud to tell their parents so they resigned themselves to a Christmas with two presents, turkey or not. “We were young and in love, I suppose,” says Audrey, “so we were willing to put up with more anything.”

Two days before Christmas, a truck was delivering their apartment, unopened. Audrey’s parents had stuffed it with decorations and gifts, and candy, tins of hot and cold, well-oiled red velvet and a stocking full of the shop like girls love. There was a letter made, too, and a cheque for \$100, because there was no room in the trunk for a tree and dinner with all the trimmings. And to a Christmas that seemed doomed and bleak, their wife’s was a second celebration with the spirit of the happy new year. “I’m because a Freeman holiday tradition is to have new children, then spouses, and then eight grandchildren joined the fold, all settling into communities near the Freeman’s home in Ajax, Ont. “If anybody walked into our place Christmas morning,” says Audrey, “they’d think we were all very sad.”

Sad? Not at all. But the biggest test of that comes this Christmas. Owen lost his job last

water after 37 years with a diagnostic x-ray, forced into early retirement (a job by illness in all, he spent three months that year in hospital). With freewill, the Freeman’s relocated to their home in Ajax, and moved back to Carmichael that October. “I guess you could say we’ve come full circle,” says Audrey. “The economic downturn has allowed us that we had no choice but to move half way across the country in order to survive on our small pension and limited savings.”

They aren’t alone in planning this year for a lean holiday season. World markets are in turmoil, national savings are gone. The economy of Canada, like most of its global trading partners, is in decline. Consumer confidence, the Conference Board of Canada reported in November, fell to its lowest point since the brutal recession of 1982. And we wonder: some 71,000 Canadian jobs were lost last month, the largest drop in 25 years.

In the U.S., which lost almost two million jobs in the past year, a survey by Consumer Reports magazine found 76 per cent of shoppers said they’d scale back their holiday spending this year. In the United Kingdom, most are so desperate to move stock that Displayance, a company that provides retail signs and banners, said out of its supply of 70-, 80- and 90-per-cent off banners.

Obviously for many that will seem a diminished holiday born of fear and debt. And yet, with tough times comes an opportunity to reimagine the holiday. There are many who see this as the recession that saved Christmas, a chance to scale back the spending and search out the optimism of our inner City Lights. But at Christmas, after all, but the willing suspension of disbelief? There is much that can’t be measured by leading economic indicators, or by money in the bank or the lack of it. For the Freemans, that standard for the Christmas dinner was set in the hardship of 44 years ago. “We are fortunate in that we started to cut back on spending and realise the true meaning of Christmas long before we were forced to,” says Audrey as she reads their home for the holidays.

This year, they face the prospect of a first Christmas for their three children, the many families this recessionary season who will be unable to spend as they are accustomed to on presents and travel. The Freemans are determined to do the best of it, saying it gives the children, now in their 10s and 40s, a chance to start their own traditions. Their gift giving has never been extravagant. “Thankfully, my family is very cooperative,” says Audrey. “They point, they make things. One is to make. They always want to come up with a homemade gift that really comes from the heart.” Last year—the last Christmas in Ajax—the children got gift baskets bequeathed

with home baking and preserves. This year (speller alert, kids!) Audrey has been leaning on and sewing up a storm.

The family will watch each other open their presents Christmas night via a Skype computer video link; the older Freeman recalling a time when a good job on the long-distance line would have cost \$20 or \$30, half a week’s take-home pay. The Freemans will dine with Audrey’s cousins in Carmichael, where they will toast their good fortune and Owen’s improving health. “He’s doing really well,” Audrey says. “We’re very thankful just to have each other, and to be able to celebrate Christmas at all.”



Purely Gentlemen. “At this festive time of year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.”
— Ebenezer Scrooge, “Willy”
—Master Scrooge in A Christmas Carol

Each season, millions of families lose them when in the black-and-white world of A Christmas Carol—the 1951 version, of course, starring Alastair Sim. Filmmakers and seasonal sentimentalists consider it to be the definitive interpretation of Charles Dickens’s classic parable of greed and redemption, an update to the poverty of Victorian London. It’s not impossible to avoid, running as it does in another year, even more chaotic or other this time of year, along with such endearing favorites as It’s a Wonderful Life and Miracle on 34th Street.

It’s a curious thing, really, the endless appeal for that and a handful of other Christmas classics. It’s a Hollywood version of the season, apparent without being biblical, in that there are no ghosts in Dickens’s classic, a tale set in a Victorian London and an alluringly simple in its message. Inevitably, there is spiritual and usually financial pollution to overcome. Always there is the revelation that, as Dr. Seuss’s Grinch discovers, Christmas “doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas—perhaps—means a little bit more.”

No matter how bloated our Christmas spending—Canadians put out a record \$40 billion last December—there is something for these stories, perhaps as an antidote to excess, or as a way of learning through the hard themes of Christ’s birth—poverty, sacrifice, generosity, redemption—without having to get all religious. Or maybe—reading toward the television through a sea of debt-inducing presents—there is a need for an emotional bond with Christ, not as it is, but as we want to think it is.

CANADIANS SPENT A record \$40 billion last December. Many plan to spend less.

After opening their few modest presents, (friends having been urged to channel their gifts to charity), they struggle before the television in their house in some Toronto Bay, B.C., to watch Scrooge’s spiritual awakening. “Think of the difference that Scrooge made in one family’s life,” says Virginia. “You can’t change the world, but if you can find one family and help change their Christmas that’s enough.”

It’s that philosophy—rediscovering the difference between spending and generosity—that inspired Scrooge’s bestselling book, *Guilt from the Heart: Simple Ways to Make Your Family Christmas More Meaningful*. It’s a sweet and wonderful story for readers to read in the season. There are simple ways, advice on dealing with illness, debt, bad divorce, and how to deal with arguments for pet lack of interest and presents that won’t put you in the poorhouse. She offers ideas for watching out, by suggesting warm chocolate drink.



NO MATTER HOW BLOATED OUR OWN SPENDING, WE LOVE CHRISTMAS TALES OF POVERTY AND SACRIFICE



CANADIANS SPENT A record \$40 billion last December. Many plan to spend less.

or making an anonymous card and food voucher to a family in need.

Brucker's *Unpublished* book in 2000, donating \$98,900 of the proceeds to cancer research. A revised and expanded version was released by Toronto-based Independent Press in time for last Christmas. Publisher Mike O'Connor says he's received a devoted readership in online sales of the book this season. "Basically, the people buying the book now are out there looking specifically for ideas on how to celebrate the season by being a little more frugal," he says. "They're plugging those sorts of things into Google and they're arriving at the book."

Brucker admits she was once an ardent student of the Martha Stewart school of festive perfection. Now she and Charlie have many outside commitments as it's a victory just to get the family decorated before Christmas Eve. These days, she says, their Christmas comes full of good rather than bad food. "It's not so much about what comes under the tree as about how we connect and reach out to other people," says Brucker.

"If it's a joyous and transient Christmas" it could be a good idea to use that happens," she says. "But I don't want to celebrate a moment because that means people are not of work and that's a very bad thing." Brucker is mostly, frantically and emotionally, Christ mas needs to change, she says. "People spend more time in the mall than they do volunteering at their communities, and that's a pretty hollow gesture." Then she pauses a moment, considering the consequences. "If we stop shopping, the stores would have to lay off a lot of people, so it's a conundrum."

Christmas has had a gift-giving companion for centuries, says Bowler. There is no great wrong in commercial aspects, it's just a question of restoring some balance, he says. There are seasons to the whole year. It's for generosity and selflessness. Christmas is for giving love, he says. "If you can't get inside as a Christian about the birth of baby Jesus, then you're in the wrong religion."

"They're finding out now that as Christmas is coming. They're just waking up, I know just what they'll do. They would still hang open a store or two, then the shops close in Whitby and all cry, 'Too late!'"

"The Greek friends-investor discontent in how the Greek crisis Christmas"

Two different realities face Canadians today, says Peter Woodford, vice president of policy development and research at the Royal Bank of Canada. Most people are making more money than last year, unemployment is still

one of the lowest past decades (although worst auto sales threaten that), and real disposable income has been rising. On the flip side, for many Canadians, "their retirement savings have fallen below the value of their house, might have dropped and they're not so sure about their future employment prospects because of all the worries about the economy," he says. "That battle is going on in the hands of everybody."

The other pendulum is that while Canada has an economy in better shape than during the recession of the early 1990s, when unemployment, inflation and debt were skyrocketing, the international scene is much more dire, says Woodford. "So you can learn from the past, but we are, to a degree, in uncharted waters." Although new realities and anxious travel providers are looking for Christmas plans, a recent survey by Delta in Canada found 51 per cent of Canadians were planning to spend as much or more than last Christmas. These plans mean that spending, however, has jumped to 40 per cent from 25 per cent.

Still, Brian Hladik of Delta says profits spending will surpass last December's level. "Consumers always spend more than they intend during the holiday season, and with Canadians enjoying lower gas prices they'll have a little more cash in their wallets." But shoppers will be more price-conscious—85 per cent of Canadians said they're going to buy more sale items. There is also evidence that Canadians are more focused on ethical buying: more than half said they're willing to spend more for an eco-friendly product.

But, as the Grinch discovered (once his mean little rascal gave three stars that day), it's not just about presents. A recent poll by Ipsos Reid and World Vision Canada found 61 per cent of Canadians plan on giving as much or more to charity as they did last year. They said they'll contribute on Christmas gifts, entertainment, dining out and giving before ending donations. It's not that Canadians are out of touch with the financial crisis, or the economy, 65 per cent say the economic downturn has made them "more likely" to help the less fortunate.

"We're finding that Canadians' generosity is as strong as ever," says Michael Messinger, vice-president of public affairs at World Vision. "They're giving more than before, but they're not doing it at the expense of the poor." From October to mid-November the number of donations to World Vision hit 13,000—a 14 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2007, he says. "It is amazing." Messinger cites examples of how his charity is being hit by the recession. Jason Droppert, a personal trainer in Windsor, Ont., is making his clients this year by making donations in their honour from World Vision's case



DONATIONS TO MANY CHARITIES HAVE GONE UP. COMPANIES ARE DOING MORE.



logues, which includes sales to the developing world, alcohol, soda, wine and more. Many Messinger, a food shop in Mississauga, Ont., is donating 10 per cent of its Saturday sales to Christmas. London's Christmas School in Winnipeg raised \$12,000.

And, although the final tally isn't in yet, it seems the downturn hasn't hurt Operation Christmas Child's ambitious target of giving 700,000 presents filled with toys to the hands of children in Central and South America and West Africa. The boxes, which donors across the country fill with simple toys, hygiene kits and school supplies, are a project of Calgary-based Salvation's Peace Canada, an international Christian evangelical aid group. "We've seen some increases [donations] increases of 15 to 20 per cent in some of the areas leading up to collection when for the longer 'East is a long time' that's what we're trying to do. We'll have more than people living in that situation somewhere else in the world."

"For us, you're here this day in the City of David's Service, which is a Christ for the Lord." —Liam Jacobs, a pastor at the Church of Christ in a Christmas appeal by the Church of Christ.

In talks and on Canadian street corners, the approaching winter is marked each year by a changing of the guard. The veterans with their canisters of poppers are replaced with the rednecks of the Salvation Army. Michael Madeline of the Ottawa Salvation Army says his favourite Christmas memory was a snowy night when he was a teen living in New Brunswick. He and the Salvation Army band set up in front of an old folk home and played live instruments holding poppers. Country music in a basement 14th century mother's home where the dwellers live it, says his child. It was the biblical story of King Herod ordering the massacre of all newborns in Bethlehem as an attempt to kill baby Jesus. Madeline watched as the seriously frail old men and women popped up in the windows of the cottages, drawn by the power of the story and the beauty of the song. "I still remember that perfect Christmas moment," he says.

The Christmas story is all about giving, says Madeline. "When you look at the Christmas message, it's about God giving his son." He expects people will rise to meet the current economic challenge as they have in the past and the Great Depression. In many ways, THE SALVATION ARMY, that icon of the Christmas season, is coping with greater need this year

Midwest says they need focus the public on the actual meaning of Christmas. As proof, he points to the tremendous response after the Indian Ocean tsunami on Boxing Day, 2004. "People [were] in the spirit to give," he says, and "the response right across Canada was absolutely incredible. And so far."

There was a similar public outpouring in Vancouver this season after a Salvation Army warehouse was robbed of \$25,000 worth of food and presents. It was a serious setback for the agency, which was trying to fill Christmas hampers for 1,600 families, up from 1,200 last year. But instead of disaster, news of the robbery inspired more than 100,000 in public and corporate donations. As well, Vancouver police reported more than 100,000 in the public and corporate donations. As well, Vancouver police reported more than 100,000 in the public and corporate donations. As well, Vancouver police reported more than 100,000 in the public and corporate donations.

The Billy Bray Memorial, B.C., is certainly coping with a greater need this season, says Bob Lawell, spokesman for the Salvation Army there. The use of its social services, from meals to emergency beds, is up 15 per cent over last year. So far, the weak economy hasn't resulted in a drop in donations in Canada's most generous city, he says. (Abbotsford, in B.C.'s Fraser Valley Bible Belt, gave a median \$640 to a variety of charities in 2007.) What financial constraints may do, he hopes, is inspire a greater sense of selfless Christmas. "Some of along the same lines as 'them's no others in a box hole,'" she says. "It really comes in to re-evaluate our priorities and what's really important, and what's of eternal value."

In South for Martin Cove, a coalition of 14 churches banded together 25 years ago to finance a soup kitchen as a response to the Algerian Star. Now, says Martin, it's a mix of volunteers. Today, churches and individual donors are again stepping up, says Gail McCollough, manager of the soup kitchen since 1995. "I've seen more new faces come through the door in the last two months than I did probably in the last five, or six of last year."

Two weeks ago, the soup kitchen's largest individual donor doubled his contribution from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Then, staff from a local office asked to help because he had McCollough told them about a gutter playing regular who calls himself Homeless Harry. Harry has been there since with the meals of two families who each have a small child. Homeless Harry plays the two children like there's no tomorrow. When the office once heard that, they knew when they would do this again. They're raised money to give the children a good Christmas.

"There's a lot of 'loud' 'tuna fests' around this world, but one of the worst is commercialism. Don't care what Christmas stands for just make a buck, make a buck."

—Alfred, the genius, Macy's Department Store, *Miracle on 34th Street*

The buds are harder to come by this year at SpruceLand Mifflinworks, a specialty lumber company on Spruce Grove, Alta. Like many export-dependent firms, it is hurting from the downturn in the construction market, and yet the owners and staff are determined to maintain their tradition of generosity. It was four years ago at a staff Christmas party that company founder Ben Sawatzky was asked about his recent international travels. He used the chance to explain his chunky work. "He has a flair for the dramatic," says Ben's son, Josh, who works in human resources.

BRUCKER QUIT THE MARTHA STEWART SCHOOL FOR A CHRISTMAS THAT FEELS, NOT LOOKS, GOOD



CHRISTMAS has had a gift-giving tradition for centuries—but there can be more

and sales for SpruceLand, "and when he speaks, he tends to grab people's attention."

After his talk, Ben handed out the annual bonuses. A worker gets his cash today; the children in one of his daughters. One thing led to another, and Ben and his partner and brother Willie Sawatzky agreed to march from their personal finances any donations the workers asked for. Now, each December, every staff member voluntarily payroll-deducts. Last year's combined total: \$303,890.

Self and management now support 118 African orphans. As tough as times are, says Josh, "You can't just stop sponsoring someone." SpruceLand is also making through a three-year commitment to build 100 houses for Hutuans in the Democratic Republic. The company's three contractors of wood to the site. And once a year, a 14 member team of SpruceLand workers arrive to help build the houses. The volunteers use a work of volunteerism and take a week of unpaid leave. Travel and accommodation costs are split between the owners and the workers. They come back with their eyes closed, says Josh. "It's a good night now," he says. "But you get people thinking, 'He's not doing too bad

We've got a pretty good situation here!'"

Then with global markets in tatters, SpruceLand decided to do generosity toward its staff. They celebrated Christmas early this November by sending 100 people—workers and their families—on an all-expense-paid week to Tulum, Mexico. They held their staff party by the water, complete with Merlot and spread tucking, dancing, and fireworks. This year's event almost certainly wouldn't have happened on this epic scale if not for a ruling forcing the return of some of the software lumber tariff SpruceLand paid into the U.S. Ben and Willie decided the party was a way to share the goodwill with those who get them through the protracted tariff wars.

SpruceLand's generosity is exceptional, but not unique. Many businesses rise charities under their wings. One such beneficiary is



RUSSIA: THE SIN OF RUNNING RED LIGHTS

Traffic police are daunted at one of their latest enforcement tactics. Cops in the city of Kuznetsk have teamed with Orthodox priests, who lecture drivers on their "sinful" driving habits. "This effort has exceeded all our expectations," a police spokesman says, adding that violators have taken for a short time the police. But the pavement. Meanwhile, traffic-rueful priests are sprinkling dangerous interactions with holy water.

Toronto's Yonge Street Mission, which helps the working poor and homeless. In his several corporate trips this season as well as a 15 percent increase in individual donations, says Ben's son, Willie, founder of development. Nike Canada, which last year sent 70 employees to volunteer, will add another 35 this season. KPMG staff are also pushing. There's a recognition: the need is greater this season, Willie says. "A lot of people think, 'There for the grace of God. It could be a lot worse for me.'" Volunteerism is up, too. "We can't best in many people as we would like to serve needs," he says. "It's amazing."

"Oh, Christmas isn't just a day, it's a frame of mind."
—Rita Kingle, *Miracle on 34th Street*

The red velvet dress gown Audrey Hepburn's daughter has long been outgrown, and her parents have passed

on, but the years haven't dimmed the memory of that best ever Christmas. If anything, it has become hushed with time, and the retelling of it, into a fine, warm glow. Now, the little girl in that dress is the one hosting the Christmas dinner. "She's taking over from Mom," Audrey says with pride. "She's mopping her own mind. As long as they're all together that's what's important to me." And time of the kids has created a painting for the French's new home in Cannes, well, that will also be worth a star or two.

Lessons were learned all these years ago, and they have been applied in good times and bad. It wasn't the dress or the party or the goodies, as welcome as they were, that saved the Christmas of '64. What spilled out of the trunk that morning was the certainty they were loved. ■

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The Year in Pictures

Maclean's presents the most
compelling photos of 2008

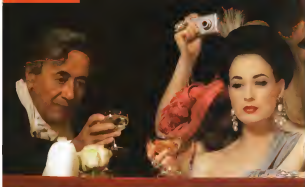
BEIJING OLYMPICS China welcomes the world with an opening ceremony packed with both loud intensity and military precision. (LARRY LAM/REUTERS)



January

KENYA Seething ethnic tensions explode after the president is accused of rigging an election, sparking a wave of violence





January **VIENNA** A man in a tuxedo, a woman in a red dress, the couple at the city's annual opera ball. (AP/WIDE WORLD)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON The Democratic presidential candidate bows to cheering supporters during a campaign stop in North Little Rock, Ark. (AP/WIDE WORLD)



February **BLACKPOOL, ENGLAND** A man surveys a beach after a ferry loaded with cargo cars (above) was driven ashore during a storm. (AP/WIDE WORLD)

NEW YORK Police officers inspect an alleged mobster's car in a neighborhood. He is one of 77 suspected Mafia members arrested in the U.S. and Italy for crimes going back 30-plus years. (AP/WIDE WORLD)



February | **GERMANY** Inspired by Tim, a father
drives his 11-month-old son safely
into the arms of a policeman, police, firefighters



March | **WASHINGTON** U.S. Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice handles before
Congress (COURTESY LARRY BUSCH/REUTERS)



March | **KATHMANDU** A fearless riot squad of tanks, Tibetan monks and monks after neighboring China violently suppressed protests in Tibet. (JAMES HANCOCK/REUTERS)

SEVILLE Spanish girls wearing traditional mantillas and dresses play after competing a school procession. (AP/WIDE WORLD)



MARCH A polar bear shakes the water out of its fur at the Friesen Wildlife Zoo. A week later the U.S. pays the bounty on its threatened species. (AP/WIDE WORLD)

April | **WASHINGTON** Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama gracefully lunges toward photographers at a campaign event. (AP/WIDE WORLD)





April **KYIV, UKRAINE** Performers are searched before the arrival of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and U.S. President George W. Bush during the ousting of Viktor Yanukovich.

ILLINOIS Kanye West ignores the flood waters looting at his house in Gretna, Ill., and moves his team. **LOUISIANA** TELESIMIAN.



PA **BENEDICT XVI** views upon his arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland for a six-day visit that included a stop at Ground Zero in New York City. **2011** **THE NEW YORK TIMES** **2011** **THE NEW YORK TIMES**

ELDORADO, TEXAS Two mothers, who belong to a polygamous Mormon sect, tell the media how their children were taken by state officials earlier that day. **2011** **THE NEW YORK TIMES**





May | **AFGHANISTAN** U.S. Marine Sgt. William Cline (Ben Fletcher) after nearly being hit by Taliban gunfire in Helmand province. (JIMMY FOWLER/REUTERS)



May **YINGXIAO, CHINA** Rescue workers like to snap the dust off their visors after a powerful earthquake that hit Sichuan province, killing at least 70,000 Chinese civilians.

GEORGE W. BUSH performs a decidedly informal chest bump with president U.S. Theodore Roosevelt during the Air Force Academy graduation ceremony in Colorado Springs, Colo. **CHARLES DRAHEIM/AP/WIDE**



CHATEAU, ORE. The volcano erupts for the first time in almost 10,000 years, spewing smoke and ash, forcing the area's residents to flee. **USA TODAY/AM**



May | **AFGHANISTAN** Canadian troops march the coffin of Cpl. Michael Stenier onto an aircraft during a repatriation ceremony in Kandahar. (credit: wikipedia/tearstop)





June | **ICMA** Lee Mahoney caught the moment that a tornado touched down outside her house in Orchard, Iowa. No one was injured, and it hit and tore.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II watches Tommy Maguire perform the ancient art of gurning—making grotesque faces while wearing a traditional horse's collar—on the grounds of the National



July | **IBRAHIM** Grace Schmitt is pictured after the attack on the 2011 World Series game during a parade in St. Louis.

August GEORGIA A still-colder first day of a freezing winter seals the Russian occupation of Pankisi Valley in 2008. (AP/WIDEWORLD)





August **USAIN BOLT** of Jamaica breaks in the 200m world at the Beijing Olympics with a world record time of 19.5 seconds. www.bbc.co.uk/sport

PRISCILLA LOVES-SCHLIEP of Windsor, Ont., celebrates after winning bronze in the women's 100-m hurdles at the Games, Canada's first track medal since 1985. www.bbc.co.uk/sport



YAO MING of China takes to the court in a preliminary men's basketball game against Germany at the 2008 Olympic Games. www.bbc.co.uk/sport

MICHAEL PHELPS is ecstatic after the United States wins the 4 x 100 m relay in Beijing, but would take home a record eight gold medals. www.bbc.co.uk/sport





September | **MIRA SORVINO** arrives at the premiere of *The Darkest*, in which she stars, at the Toronto International Film Festival. (JOHANNA LAMPHREY/ABC)



BOB BAE gives Liberal party leader Stéphane Dion a peck on the cheek during an election campaign event in Toronto. The party received its lowest popular vote tally in modern times. (GREGG DEGUARD)

STEPHEN HARPER bakes his time while waiting for a television interview to start in Mississauga, Ont., the Tories' strongest seat count, but failed to gain a majority in the House. (DALLA COLLECTION)





September **SARAH PALIN** The Republican vice-presidential nominee shakes hands during the party's convention at St. Paul, Minn. (JOSHUA AHLBOM)

ELIZABETH MAY The Green party leader tours the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver during the election campaign and encounters a resident. (DAVID JACKSON)



October **JOHN MCCAIN** looks a little weary walking the winding city streets following his first period of debate with Barack Obama. (JIM SPELLMAN/ABC)

RICHARD FULD The CEO of bankrupt investment bank Lehman Bros. is confirmed in Congress before defending the \$550 million he took in salary and bonuses since 2000. (JOSHUA AHLBOM)





November

MOSCOW Crowds in Red Square mark the anniversary of a 1941 parade by Soviet troops marching to the front line. **STANIS SHVARTS/REUTERS**



GAZA A Palestinian smuggler moves a deer through a tunnel from Egypt to Gaza. The UN suspended its food aid distribution after Israel sealed off crossings to the Palestinian territory. **OMAR HAMAM**



RAJSHAH Indian army soldiers move to take control of the Taj Mahal hotel. **REUTERS/REUTERS**

PARIS A photograph of a man and a woman, likely the couple who were killed in the Paris attacks. **REUTERS/REUTERS**



November | **YOSHA LINDA, CALIF.** An antitank missile over the edge of a hot wildfire that destroyed more than 100 homes, leaving only ruins.



December | **ATHENS** A policeman runs to safety after being hit by a firebomb hurled by rioting Greek students. (AP/WIDE WORLD)

MICHAEL, ISRAELI arrives to reporters with David McGowan and Bonnie Crimble after a Liberal caucus meeting in Parliament Hill in Ottawa. (AP/WIDE WORLD)



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CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE?

Blood hust is so George Bush. This year's hot movies were about tolerance and forgiveness. BY BRIAN D. JOHNSON

Film

Barack Obama hasn't even moved into the White House yet, but already his spirit seems reflected in the emerging complexion of the big screen. Although film takes years to make, and are not needed by recent events, Hollywood has a way of anticipating the zeitgeist. And what a difference a year makes. Last December, the screen was a blood-drenched landscape of unrelenting cruelty. From the hair-raising violence of *No Country for Old Men* and *Katrina* to the rape scenes of *There Will Be Blood* and *Michael Clayton*, the Oscar-eligible movies that showed humanity trapped in a dark, cold place with no exit in sight. Only *Hope* offered a ray of hope.

This year, however, the screen is awash with tales of redemption. And it's not coincidental that the Golden Globes and critics' awards are by indication, Hollywood knows but for a few years the genre of social realism, racial diversity, forgiveness and reconciliation. Among the field of Oscar hopefuls, Sean Penn has emerged as a leading contender for his portrayal of assassinated gay rights activist Harvey Milk. A genius to a community organizer who became the first openly gay man elected to public office in America, Gus Van Sant's *Milk* has uncanny resonance in the age of Obama. And despite the tragic ending, it's inspiring with its message of hope—gay in every sense of the word.

Penn's transformation in the role sets the standard for movie heroes in 2008. Everywhere you look, tough guys are letting down their guard and getting sensitive—finding their inner Milk. In *The Wrestler*, a barely recognizable Mickey Rourke plays a scarred

boxer with a heart condition who dissolves into a puddle of sentiment as he tries to reconcile with his estranged 16-year-old daughter (Olivia Rachel Wood). Rourke plays Runtz "the Rat," a body-dissolving legend who lives on milk, drugs and a single gun. But while Rourke's punching antics in the ring are rarely impressive, what's most touching is the sensitivity in the emotional scenes. The performance goes beyond a comeback. Rourke has never done anything like this before.

The same could be said for Jean Claude Van Damme, another fighter who has landed his vulnerability on the screen. Playing himself in *JVW*, a playful, raucous talking drama, Van Damme strips away his macho image and unleashes a wry confession of his fallibility straight to the camera. Even Clint Eastwood, the oldest living icon of Hollywood machismo, has thrown in the towel. In *Gran Torino*, a movie that swerves from anti-gay conservatism to gay rights, Eastwood plays a bigoted, gun-toting, beer-swilling Korean war vet—a retired auto worker—who stands up to some Asian gangbangers in his war-torn neighborhood. Despite his growing *Badass* in "gooks," this salty vet was warmly embraced by the *Honoring* (straight) family next door, who are being ter-

rored by the gang. Eventually, after in doing *Dirty Harry* as a grumpy old man but in *74*, it looks like he's burying his entire-day brutalism once and for all. It's like watching a hopped-up John McCain falling on his sword.

Still, *Gran Torino*, like *The Wrestler*, allows the audience to have its beefy and eat it too. On the one hand, we can root in Eastwood's grizzled character of old-guard aggression—no where here in American movie has anyone ever put out so many racist epithets and got away with it. On the other, as he's won over by the neighbors' ethnic culture, we see him melt into an old softie.

Aside from unleashing their inner macho man, white protagonists are having their world rocked by characters from beyond their race and culture. In *Franny River*, a small indie feature (also by American filmmaker Clint Eastwood), Michael Lee is writing screen for her portrayal of a tender Irish woman who lives with a Michael woman in struggling illegal alien across the New York-Quebec border. And in *The Visitor*, a widowed professor (Richard Jenkins) loses his nerve by leaving Alissa (Michelle Williams) for an illegal immigrant.

The notion of Americans grappling to expand their horizons comes up again in *Revolution and War*—a '50s tale of a temperamental romance between an adman (Leonardo DiCaprio) and a desperate housewife (Kate Winslet), who wants to flee their New York suburb and move the family to Paris. Now that victims of a temperamental, multicultural America are becoming the norm, vintage white bread conformity takes on an old-fashioned twist. In *Mad Men*, *Revolution and War* has as much in the marriage of a man and a woman, while allowing us to feel coolly superior to a world that isn't discovering them. *Revolution and War* and *Mad Men* are the first time since *Thelma & Louise* and *Thelma & Louise* are welcome in another doomed romance, but this time it's a ticking marriage in a ticking clock. While they're for more glamorous than anyone around them, neither is especially likable. He's a shallow philanderer, she's a bitter actress who expects him to fall for her threatened creativity. The intensity of their passion is frustrating.

This sounds mean, none of the new

PHOTO: GARY WATSON FOR PETER LINDBERGH

CLINT EASTWOOD in *Gran Torino* (left); deeper hit *Slumdog Millionaire* (right)

Slumdog scrappers are among the adorable underdogs





BEFORE FOR DISASTER: There's a long list of things that can go wrong when deep-frying a turkey; even 200 mistakes can threaten serious burns

The call-911 Christmas turkey

Deep-fried turkey is crispy, tender and succulent. It can also be extremely dangerous.

BY ALEXANDRA BRUNO • Deep-fried turkey is a dish for people who want to live on the edge. Steve Pendegast, a firefighter in Kern County, Calif., found this out on Christmas Day 2001. He'd received about 10 people over for Christmas dinner and was preparing two roasters sized birds. After deep-frying the first one, he immersed the second into the large pot of oil. "A ball of fire" came up from the propane-fueled cooker, he says. Panicking, he tried to pull the turkey out of the fryer, but the bird and the pot tipped over. Boiling oil splashed over him and the patio floor where he had been cooking. Suddenly, his clothes were on fire and his skin was burning—charms of flesh were "falling off," he says. As his wife and two young daughters watched horrified through the window, he stripped off his clothes and rolled around in the snow to put out the flames.

In recent years, a growing number of fires caused by deep-fried turkey have been reported, according to the Underwriters Laboratories website. North America's largest independent consumer-safety organization, it's difficult to estimate exactly how many fires deep-fried turkeys cause in the U.S. or in Canada, since all types of cooking fires are usually lumped together. Nevertheless, in the U.S., where the cooking method originated, fire departments have issued safety demonstration videos and warnings, says Lorraine Clark, spokesperson for the U.S. National Fire Protection Association. Just a few weeks ago, a group of Canadian firefighters from Toronto's municipal food emergency services intervened to end a deep-fry turkey fire at a Buffalo Bills football game. Luckily, the fire first went out before anyone was hurt. Clark expects more incidents like this as the cooking method becomes more common. It's a

"recipe for disaster," she says.

Pendegast's mistake was that the oil was too hot. That is one of the hazards of deep-fried turkey: the oil has to be exactly the correct temperature. Once it starts overheating, it soon reaches the temperature at which it ignites, called the flashpoint (about 335°C for peanut oil). Another common error is putting too much oil in the pot and then, when the turkey is added, the oil spills over onto the open flame, says John Drangenberg, manager of consumer affairs at Underwriters Laboratories. Drangenberg describes the bird too quickly, so the oil overflowed onto the fire. Or you might not wait long enough for the oil to get hot enough. If any part of the turkey is still wet, the oil will turn to steam, and the boiling oil will either start to splutter or the whole pot will explode.

Some models of turkey fryers are also electrically risky. They've gotten safer in recent years, says Drangenberg. But while the Canadian Standards Association authorizes a safety call to report any type of turkey fryer, his organization says no model is safe enough to make the grade.

When Californian Kevin Harrison deep-fried his turkey in October 2003, he cooked it inside his garage. (Manufacturers usually recommend cooking outside, a good distance from one's property.) As he sliced the

bird, the oil flamed and produced a "bright red flame that was shooting three feet high out of the boiling pot," according to testimony in court documents. Harrison's neighbor, Richard Hernandez, ran over to try to help. As they were trying to extinguish the fire, Hernandez spilled burning oil on his arms, legs and face. He survived with second- and third-degree burns and subsequently sued both the turkey fryer manufacturer and the store where his neighbor bought the cooker, settling for US\$1.15 million.

Despite the dangers, deep-fried turkey is becoming more popular in Canada, says Stephen Alexander, owner of Canibese Farms, a high-end butcher shop in Toronto. He fires off a two-day deep-fried turkey only once, but says "frying" a deep-fried turkey in all the pieces is the most modern and successful, he says. The skin is crispy and dark. The bird cooks in very little time—10 to 15 minutes—even with a larger bird.

After Steve Pendegast's accident, he spent three weeks in the intensive care unit with third-degree burns to 25 percent of his body. He is finally back at work. In his spare time, he visits burn victims, particularly people who have been injured while deep-frying turkey (five of them to date). He's also met another firefighter who fried his bird while he was on duty, and almost burned down the fire station. "I wouldn't recommend it to other people," he says. Then again, "it depends on your reaction to risk." ■



TODAY'S SPECIAL...HOT, PEPPERY COCKTAILS

That old spicy sweet cocktail and Peppy cocktails? The pandemic has swung over to mouth-burning cocktails like habanero paper or habanero peppers. The "Mad as Hell" is one example: the sweetness of rum is well balanced with cayenne and salt. The ginger margarita, meanwhile, finds up the sweetness of traditional margarita has with the Chile. And now that bloody Marys are being torches with cayenne and habanero

PHOTO: JASON FOSTER/ISTOCK.COM



THE AUTHORITY of Uncle Dan's was against backing the offending sibling from the festivities. It was sure to help family peace

Uncle Dan's 'not feeling well,' kids

Experts offer tips on how to handle alcoholic siblings during the festive holiday season

BY JESSA MCNEILL • "Christmas is a great time for a drink," says a recovering alcoholic from Ontario. "I could go out at a moment's notice for 'more nibbles' or snaggle three large bottles of vodka with the hostess of Christmas parties." Not only that, but no-one's Christmas ever questions a lack of food. "Everyone thought I needed privacy to wrap their gifts." Christmas may be great for drinks but at least one brother in British Columbia is dreading a repeat of his older brother's annual drunken shenanigans on Christmas Day at his parents' place. "It's a huge problem. I've tried confronting him to discuss alcohol, says Kevin in Vancouver, whose brother starts each day with a pint and runs in his office. "Telling him not to drink leads for fire, and as a result, he drinks more. My poor mother."

Now that's a shock of advice for the brother and sisters of alcoholics, including how to cope with a sibling's drinking over the holidays. To start with, the time to negotiate boundaries is before Christmas, not at the dinner table, says Patricia O'Brien, co-author, along with Dr. Petros Levounis, of *Siber Shrink: How to Help Your Alcoholic Brother or Sister—and Not Lose Yourself*. "It's futile trying to have a conversation with someone under the influence," writes O'Brien, adding on the phone last week that it's even more hopeless if the person in denial (O'Brien grew up with two alcoholic brothers). When Kevin in Vancouver challenged his sibling last Christmas about his drinking, "he ordered me out of his house."

In some cases when the sister or brother won't admit to a problem but you still want to send a warning, it may work best not to mention the word "drink." Instead, O'Brien

suggests saying, "I noticed you weren't feeling well on Thanksgiving. If you're not 'feeling well' again on Christmas, I'm going to drive you home."

O'Brien warns against berating your sibling from the festivities. In one case, "it caused a big family upset because the mother was not willing to exclude the brother." If your alcoholic sister is "simply talkative and giggles too much when she drinks, or falls asleep, then you may want her there no matter what," writes O'Brien. "But if the same comes out and the mess the occasion for everyone," find a "strong way to cut her out of the welcome if she keeps not to drink. Say, 'We'd love to see you but I have to say, when you have four or five drinks, it's a problem for us. I'd rather not have Christmas the way we've had it in the past. I have children now.' [Then] maybe they won't come," says O'Brien.

For a few years, Kevin lived close enough to drink his brother to and from his parents' house. He's learned to "keep the attitude light" when offering to be the designated driver. "Don't relate it to the reason you're doing it: 'I'm sober. This is going to be fun. blah, blah, blah.'"

Kevin's brother now lives an hour and a half out of town, he doesn't know how to stop him from drinking drunk this year. The year he confronted his brother's car keys, it

didn't go well. O'Brien stresses, "Never argue with someone who is drunk or high." It's apparent your sibling plans to drive drunk. "Leave the keys while he's preoccupied and take them away. Most likely he'll think he's lost them."

In April, "Jim" checked into Natalie's. Edgewood treatment center for a six-week inpatient drug program. He hadn't had a drink in eight months. A few weeks ago, his sister "Tina" took him to a parking lot, thinking, "Why wasn't I more organized? I knew I was going to drive." Outside the car, he told her, "The bus was in the parking lot. People drink and do what they do." She told Natalie whether to mention alcohol around him. "I don't want to go to his recovery up."

O'Brien says, "A person in recovery has a right to participate in decisions that directly impact recovery, such as the person who will be in the car comfortable with." O'Brien suggests asking, "Do you intend if we drink in front of you? Would you like us to have a no-alcohol house for you? What would you like to drink?" O'Brien herself found out too late that her younger brother didn't appreciate her stocking alcohol-free beer for him. Last May when she was visiting the books, he told her he'd had a bad day. His wife told O'Brien afterwards he "didn't need no-alcohol beer and it only reminded him he couldn't drink." ■



MOST IMPROVED PAUL ANKA

The moving of Anka's singing career is on the move after losing his head stapled shut in a California hospital. Ottawa-born Anka had drunk at home with his wife Anna. During the altercation, Anna allegedly picked up a glass of wine and threw it a line drive straight into Paul's head, cutting it open. Paul's real pressing thoughts says Anna's only stabbed out over a child custody issue pertaining to a previous marriage.



NOT FOR THE WEAK-KNEED: Wearing skin-tight, unbreathable leggings can be doubly embarrassing—not to mention uncomfortable

Squelch. Squelch. Squeak. Squeak.

Liquid leggings are all the rage, but some women have discovered a few problems...

BY ALEXANDRA DRIMO • Liquid leggings, sported by Posh Spice, Rihanna, Lindsay Lohan and Ashley Olsen, once among other celebrities, have replaced the plummy jeans as the newest butt item. Fashion insiders, however, should beware: wearing this kind of clothing can be deeply embarrassing, as Jacine Faria, a Toronto internet Web producer, knows only too well. She has three pairs. When she wears the leggings, her friends never hear, saying she looks like she's wearing Superman's tights. "They say I'm crazy. They tell me 'No post-fire!'"

When Moira Lundström Halbert, 22, a fourth-year University of Toronto student and freelance business journalist, wears her skin tight pleather leggings, she too gets attention. People have stopped and asked, "Are your pants leather?" to which she replies, "No, they are even tackier than leather, they are latex."

Liquid leggings have a number of names: they are also called latex, rubber, glossy or leather leggings. The material looks like extremely thin, very shiny leather, although it tends to be synthetic, like pleather, latex, or vinyl. According to a posting by a New Jersey blogger named "hot", the pants reflect light "in this weird way" that "catches your attention no matter what." Some men have complained about being unable to stop staring at body parts covered by liquid leggings, says "hot." "Then you'd get caught staring, but it was totally unintentional." Faria has caught a lot of men staring in the fashion. It's understandable, she says—the leggings make her behind look like "a highly lit apple."

Toronto hair colourist Nicole Barbosa wears black liquid leggings to work, and says she

usually receives lots of compliments when she does. But because she tucks her behind a little larger than she'd like, she coaches the leggings with longer shoes and sweaters to hide any bits that stick out.

But that stick out isn't the only downside to the dictionary new leggings. Wearing a skin-tight, stretchy legging, an breathable material can be sweaty and uncomfortable, says Faria. The leggings can also ride down on the couch, bunching upon all the wrong places, says Miranda Paves, an editor at Elle magazine in New York. Or they can rise too high, giving the wearer a wedgie. Either way, they require constant vigilance. There's the issue they make. Lundström Halbert says they squeak and squelch when she sits, those material rub together.

Cleaning them can also be a problem. The shiny material is often made of a latex fibre coated with a polyurethane or a similar synthetic coating. When the latex stretches, the plastic part peels off. Some brands are not machine washable either. (Since they aren't breathable, regular cleaning is important.) Lundström Halbert says even handwashing can damage them. Her "unintentional and gross" isolation was to turn them inside out after wearing and spray them with air freshener.

Since the material is so fragile, the leg

gings were out quickly, says Lara Cohen, an online editor at USO Canada. She bought a \$59 black pair for a holiday season party. While they looked great at the start of the evening, she says, they got increasingly soiled as the night wore on. By the end of the evening, they looked tacky and cheap, and so scratched that her friend was able to scuff his name on her leg with his nail. The next day she bought a new pair for another party, but the second pair looked just as bad after a single night. Cohen has now given up on pleather leggings completely. "It is worthless," she adds. "I would say no."

Lundström Halbert took very good care of her glossy leggings, but they still lasted only a month. The latex peeled and rubbed off. After a few weeks, she took the leggings back to the store, where gave her a discount on her next purchase. She bought two more pairs, but she worried the damaged pair was quickly so she has now given up on pleather leggings and bought real leather ones instead.

Liquid leggings may be the latest fashion must-have, but don't expect them to have longevity, says Franca Grubis, a Toronto-based wardrobe stylist. It will likely be one of those trends that's increasingly hard to understand once the moment has passed, she says. "In the future, we'll probably look back and say 'Oh my God, I was wearing plastic leggings in public. What the hell was I thinking?'" ■



THE LATEST THING IN: PATTERNED TANS

Who doesn't dream the image of a "tanner's tan," one that shows brown arms and neck on an otherwise party-white body? Designer Yu-chiao Wong has turned patterned tans into a sophisticated vision with "Sun Tattoos," a wearable cloth strip of tint allows you to see light and delicate patterns onto your back and backside while leaving other areas of skin covered by the skin's contrasting white.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW IDEAS



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ROGERS

Words that
ought to
be in the
dictionary,
'08 editionLet's close out the year by
reflecting on the person-
alities and events of 2008
and compiling the Third
Annual List of Words That
Ought to Be Added to the
Dictionary (Afterwards, why
not visit the Opinion sec-
tion of Maclean's and add your own sub-
mission to the list.)**arbore** verb the inability to just let
it go silently. Twelve years after
the chess-playing game, Roger still
remembered that extremely fondly.**benekne** verb to appear bored,
dazed and helpless in the face
of events. apt, position, fishery,
feline.**Magesjevich** noun 1. one who
communicates with consciousness
near. 2. Tini Magesjevich rebuffed a
bank without a snarl—or a gasp
of awe.2. a grown man who wears a mustache upon
his head.**bush** verb to long ardently for
someone's departure. After find-
ing half a pizza on the couch of our
refuge, my wife began looking about
my couch craving her friend.**thence** noun 1. scripture, rarely
used in public, possibly mythical,
believed to feed exclusively upon
key-words and the intricacies of
literary or scientific texts.
2. one who successfully leaves the most dis-
crepant parts of all—ours?**Conservative** (arg. Canadian)
noun one who advocates and
viciously adheres to principles of
true (or fake) political orthodoxy,
right up until achieving power.**dion verb** 1. to refuse to abandon
a failed idea even when it's obvious
that no one likes it. Beyond its
driving the whole Sasha Pierce
thing, apt, grounds 1. to resign in failure
and then, not long thereafter, to resign even
sooner to even more failure. 2. adjective; blurry,
out of focus.**dove verb** to decline so rapidly as
to freeze the muscles of breath-
less weakly types on pop from their
eye sockets.**groovesman** noun to recognize that
his department is widely believed
to be competent at his job and
realize he was, in fact, not. When
the auditor declared that our financial
records consisted of nothing more than dozens
of a fancy pack, a private island and bags
marked with a dollar sign, we began
groovesman about our departed CFO.**harper** verb to overplay one's
hand. aware the belief in some
cultures that a simple blend of
polyester and cotton, when spun
into the shape of a vest, can confer human
qualities on inert objects.**dion (verb)** 1. to refuse to abandon a failed
idea 2. (adjective) blurry, out of focus**ignomine** verb 1. to have some-
thing you've long desired simply
fall into your lap. King Arthur,
while reprehensibly was trans-
fected by the Holy Grail and the sword, 2. to
be in a manner that suggests the very act
of smiling is causing tremendous discomfort.
noun 1. the only known act of self-
awareness.**jackson** noun a genre of screen-
writing wherein the plot is natu-
rally constructed to minimize
their removal. apt, incongruity.**joe (noun)** 1. "the phantom"
mean the sound of one's 15 min
stomach being empty.**jaug** verb the sudden waiting
of a once nervous threat. That
Jennifer for 15 min of now has been
jugged for a moment of nerves.**lapins** noun 1. a breed of the
Year award given by the
Kitchen Table Manufacturers As-
sociation. 2. a patch of facial hair.**lapins** noun 1. a breed of the
Year award given by the
Kitchen Table Manufacturers As-
sociation. 2. a patch of facial hair.above the by in which grows delicious
of grime.**lather** verb to suppose abruptly.
Dave was sitting right there but then
the water brought the bill and he
lathered.**mawley** (noun, full by "and me")
mean the experience of seeing a
film trailer and wanting out only
to avoid the movie but also that
harm on those responsible for making it.**may** (noun, pronounced "duh") verb
to be taken seriously, unexpect-
edly. I dropped a note in the bag
gabbling and/or I've been nagged
to give a presentation to the board.**may** verb 1. to believe in a
remitter that betrays a sense
of increasing desperation. Her act-
ing career stalled, the human cap-
ital measured by contacting Mugh Hefner.**obama** verb 1. to achieve victory
despite a stiff, appearing to have
no shot at winning. I couldn't
believe it when Martin Tomez**obama** verb 1. to achieve victory
despite a stiff, appearing to have
no shot at winning. I couldn't
believe it when Martin Tomez**palin** noun 1. a doctrine of global
diplomacy based on geographic
proximity. 2. a large gamble that
it's to put out. In retrospect,
trusting that Karlson drag over with my
PDA and issue my proof to be quite
palin. verb 1. to speak words generally
accepted to be part of the English language,
but to make no sense while doing so. 2.
to point out an entire country to shake its head
in disbelief.**palin** noun 1. a doctrine of global
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in disbelief.ON THE WEB: To add your own suggestions
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LORI CHRISTINE FERGUSON

1955-2006

She helped disadvantaged kids, some seriously ill, others with mental challenges, realize their dreams

Lori Christine Ferguson (nee Hayes) was born in Winnipeg on Aug. 26, 1955, with the love of travel/food in her genes. Her father, James Hayes, was a porter with CP Rail. Her mother, Florence, a part-time cleaner with the Canadian National Railway, held the fort during her husband's frequent travels. In all, Lori had siblings, and she would frequently have to hold her own against the teasing of her three brothers, Florence recalls.

Lori was a shy and gentle spirit, with a love of children and a compassion for strays. "Animals used to always follow her home," Florence says. "Especially cats. I guess she was just a lovable girl." She attended Elmwood High School in Winnipeg, and, after a stint working for Zellers, she joined Air Canada in 1987. "She loved travelling," says Florence. It was after a transfer to Air Canada's Vancouver operations in 1991 that Lori found the passion that consumed the rest of her life.

Airline volunteers in Toronto had successfully in 1989, which raised funds to send a planeload of disadvantaged children to Walt Disney World. The first flight, in 1990, sent 68 children and 32 adults on a whirlwind one-day trip to Florida. The idea inspired Lori. Shortly after her transfer, she helped establish a Vancouver chapter. In 1993, Lori, and by now a small army of volunteers, led the first group of 325 B.C. children—some seriously ill, others with mental or physical challenges—on a trip to Disneyland in California. As far as Lori was concerned, it was love at first flight.

From then on Lori had her full-time work for Air Canada, then Air Canada, and her full-time charity work in founding Vancouver president of Dream's Take Flight. The charity goes to eight Canadian cities, and Air Canada stations in Los Angeles and Tampa. It offers trips each year to some 1,800 children. For a time, Lori also served as the charity's national president.

Moments later, a Vancouver manager of indulgent service for Air Canada, in her 13th year as volunteer with Dream's, the last night as vice president. "What inspired me to keep going with Dream's was Lori's passion for it," she says. It was 12 years ago that Lori met Logan Ferguson, now a purchaser for an upscale Vancouver hotel. They were introduced through a mutual friend at a party. "Things didn't exactly go as planned," recalls Logan. Through a courti-

ous understanding, each left thinking that the other was gay. That got sorted out within days, and they were named as parents later.

Marrying Lori carried accolades. "I married her charity to wit," Logan says. Although each flight is but one very long, very wonderful day, it requires a year's worth of planning, fundraising and logistics. Like Lori, Logan was hooked on Dream's from his first flight, 11 years ago. "I got to realize how small my world had been until then," he says. "It's amazing the strength these kids have. Just seeing them actually become children again on that day is just huge." Lori and he were unable to have children, says Logan. "So her life was dedicated to other people's kids—kids that really needed help."

Lori was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2005. She had been through it with surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, all during that year's Disney trip on the third Tuesday-October. "We thought we'd kicked it by December," says Logan. Lori's work earned her an Air of Excellence award by Air Canada, which included a three-day trip to Europe. The couple ate heartily by going to Australia last January. Lori had befriended a girl named Amber, who was too sick with cancer to make the 2007 Dream's flight. Amber had given Lori a purple balloon, on which she'd drawn a face and passed on years for her. Lori took the balloon, named Lella, to Australia.

At key points on the trip she'd infuse Lella, and Logan would take their picture. Lori made an album, says Logan, "so Amber saw Lella's eyes."

The cancer, a particularly aggressive and invasive strain, returned in April, says Logan. Monica, who had stopped an as president, nonetheless her friend saying her to keep Dream's alive. "What we're going to do," says Monica. "We've got to keep her legacy going." Amber grew an organ. Lori grew weaker. She used the last of her fading strength to help organize this year's event. On Oct. 25, confined to a wheelchair, Lori made her last trip to Disneyland. Among the 125 cancer children aboard was Amber—one of 2,000 children over 16 years to whom Lori helped give the gift of a single, magical day. She died on Nov. 12, barely three weeks later, her last wish fulfilled. "Dream's," says her husband, "was her dream."

BY KEN MACGREGOR



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